女子の試合を描く上で
一番大変なのは、
担当さんが
「可愛く描いてくださいね！」
と念を押してくることかな……。

勝木 光

Baby Steps

SHONEN MAGAZINE COMICS

Baby Steps

ベイビーステップ

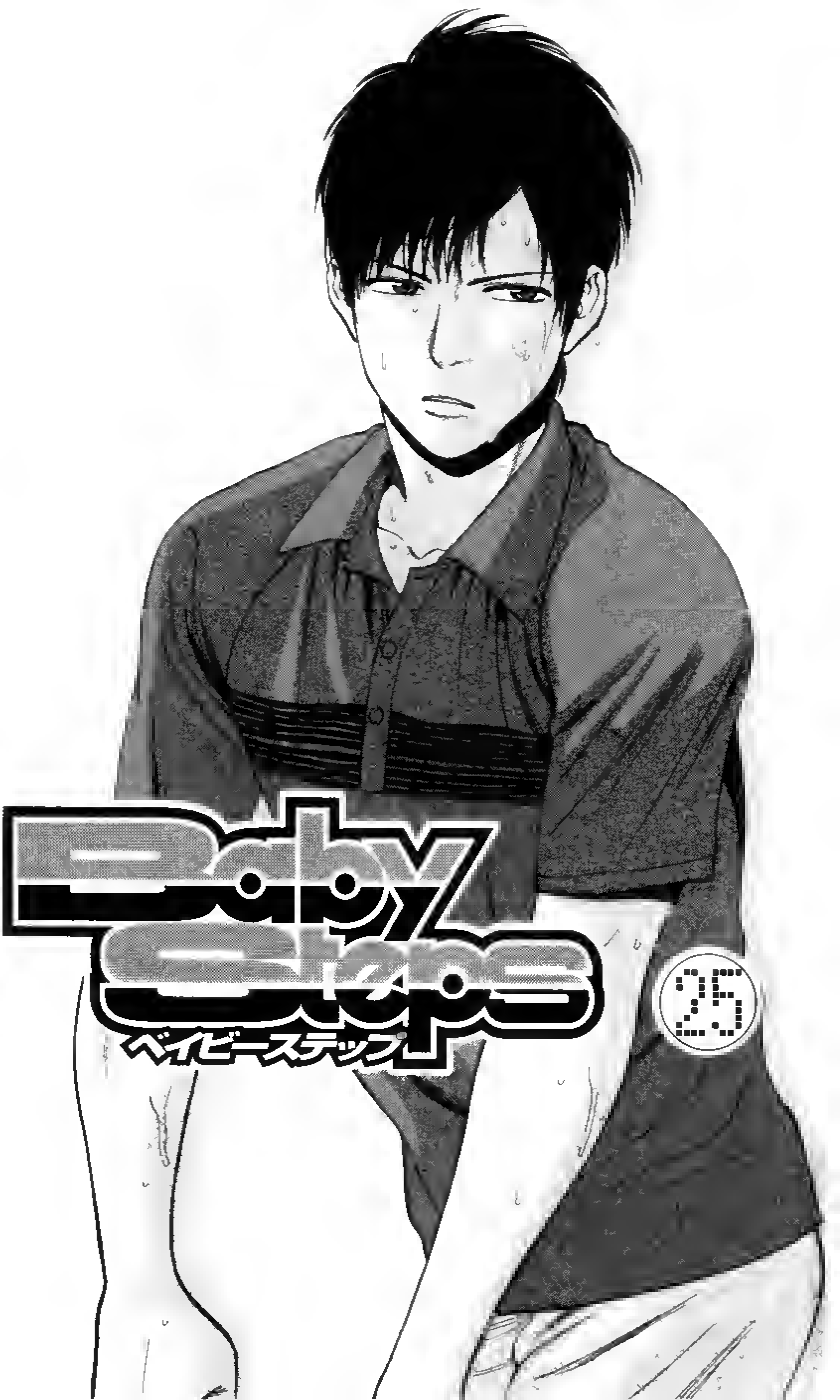
25

勝木 光

KC

Baby Steps ベイビーステップ 25 勝木 光 講談社

SHONEN MAGAZINE COMICS


Baby Steps
ベイビーステップ
25

Baby Step
ベイビーステップ

人物紹介

エーちゃん
丸尾栄一郎

STC所属。「今回の全日本ジュニアで優勝、そしてプロへ」が命題。そこで優勝できなければプロを諦めるという条件付きで、テニス最優先の生活を送っている。同じ夢を持つナツは心の支え。ナツとの交際がテニスに好影響!?

ナツ
鷹崎奈津

STC所属。全国トップレベルの選手でプロ志望。理論派・エーちゃんとは真逆の超感覚派で、それが互いの刺激に。ただいま恋もテニスも絶好調!!

佐々木千子

エーちゃんの試合に必ず駆けつけてくれる心強い応援団。千子はエーちゃんへの想い実らず失恋。

影山小次郎

影山は親友

青井コーチ

STCでのエーちゃんのコーチ。元プロ選手という経験に裏付けされた指導でエーちゃんをサポート

清水亜希

コーチである父親と二人三脚でプロを目指す ジュニア日本一の選手で、エーちゃんに片想いだが…。

全日本も快調！
最大のライバルは亜希!?

親公認カップル♥

エーちゃん談 何でこんなカワイイ娘と!?

全日本ジュニア

各都道府県から勝ち上がった強豪64名が出場。優勝者には、日本のプロが総結集する全日本選手権の出場権が与えられる。

Baby Steps

CONTENTS

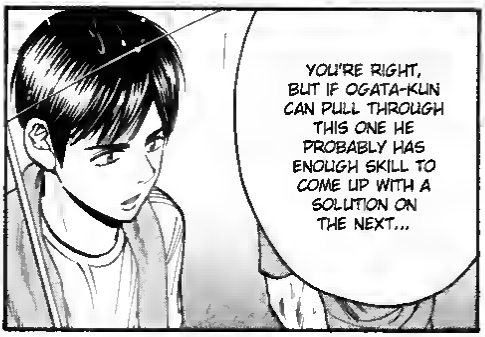
#232 TIME TO CHALLENGE
#233 VALUE OF VICTORY
#234 HOPE
#235 DISRUPTION
#236 BATTLE OF THE ELITES
#237 ESCAPE
#238 STRAW TO CLING ON
#239 RETREAT
#240 POSITION

SPECIAL CHAPTER

to Giant Strides

IT'S HUGE THAT HE MANAGED TO CONVINCE OGATA THAT HE CAN FIGHT WITH POWER EVEN IF IT'S NOT HIS SPECIALTY...
BUT HE GOT THE MATCH POINT FROM CONTROLLING A CRITICAL SHOT WITH A SHARP ANGLE...
THAT MARUO... HE MADE IT SEEM LIKE HE WAS GOING TO GO WITH A POWER BATTLE FOR THE LAST GAME,

WHAT'S HE GOING TO DO NOW...

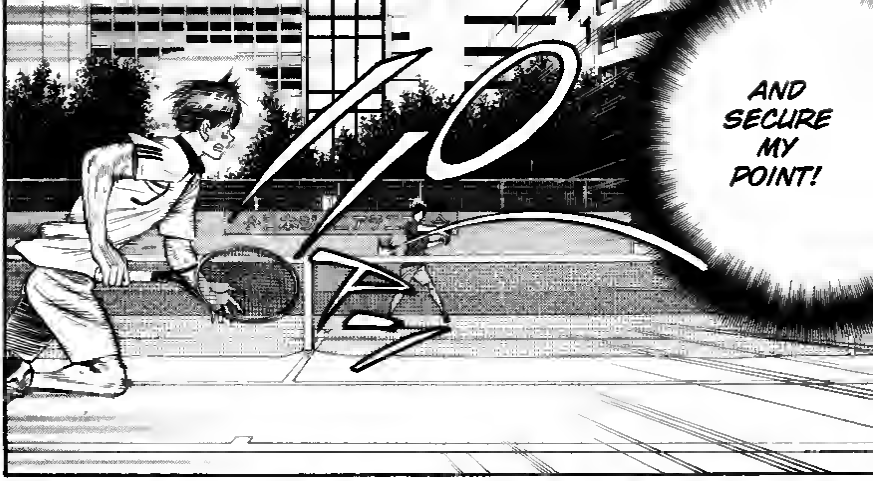

YOU'RE RIGHT, BUT IF OGATA-KUN CAN PULL THROUGH THIS ONE HE PROBABLY HAS ENOUGH SKILL TO COME UP WITH A SOLUTION ON THE NEXT...

アテ
スッ

MATCH POINT... IF OGATA-KUN IS GOING TO GO WITH THE ATTACK HE'S HAD THE THE MOST SUCCESS WITH SO FAR...
#232 CHALLENGE

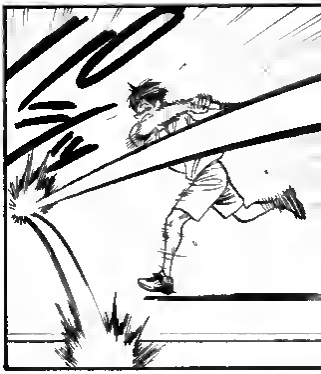
全日本ジュニアテニス大会
WIDE!
KO

PUSH MARUO-KUN'S ALL-OR-NOTHING JUMP SHOT TO THE BACK OF MY MIND...
EVEN THOUGH I READ THE SERVE, ALL I COULD DO WAS RETURN IT DEEP.
RGH
PAY ATTENTION TO THE CHANGING TEMPO AND HIS ACCURATE CONTROL... AND MORE IMPORTANTLY ON HOW I AM GOING TO ATTACK.
THERE'S NO NEED TO PAY ATTENTION TO A SHOT THAT IS LESS LIKELY TO HAPPEN AND HAS A HIGH PROBABILITY OF A MISTAKE.
I WILL STAY ON TOP OF HIM IN ALL ASPECTS...
FIREPOWER, FOOTWORK, AND FAST PROGRESSION...


AND SECURE MY POINT!

EVEN IF I'M GOING BACK AND FORTH, I'LL NEVER LET GO OF MY OVERALL LEAD.

SIMPLY BUYING TIME WON'T CUT IT.



EVEN IF IT'S HIGH RISK, I NEED TO LEVERAGE MY JUMP SHOT TO FIGHT.
THEN REGARDLESS OF WHETHER OR NOT I AM GOING TO HIT IT, I NEED TO AT LEAST GET IN POSITION TO SET UP...

AGH.
SHOOT .. RAIN GOT INTO MY EYE AND IT HIT CLOSE TO THE FRAME.
IS HE GOING TO USE THE JUMP SHOT?!
!?

?!
CRAP, IT WAS TOO SUDDEN THAT I COULDN'T REACT
EVEN THOUGH IT WAS A PERFECT CHANCE!
HE DIDN'T USE IT OR HE COULDN'T?
NO, DON'T BE AGITATED
RGH
THE GAME IS STILL IN OGATA'S FAVOR. .
IS MARUO PLANNING TO WAIT UNTIL HE FINDS A CHANCE?

I'M NOT FINDING AN OPPORTUNITY NO MATTER HOW LONG I WAIT...
BUT IF I'M GOING TO LOSE THIS CHANCE...
BUT SINCE THERE'S A HIGH CHANCE OF FAILURE, I WANT TO HIT IT WHEN I HAVE EVEN A SMALL ADVANTAGE
IT'S NOT IMPOSSIBLE TO GO FOR A JUMP SHOT...
I CAN'T FIND AN OPENING EVEN IF I WAIT..
IF I'M GOING TO LOSE THE MATCH POINT WITHOUT DOING ANYTHING
THEN I WANT TO GO FOR IT!
ALL OR NOTHING.

OPEN COURT!
!!
BULLS-EYE!!!

HIS RE-ACTION IS FAST!
YES!
THIS IS THE TIMING OF A JUMP SHOT...
DON'T BE TOO CONCERNED
WITH THAT DEPTH AND THAT DISTANCE... MY LEGS CAN REACH IT.

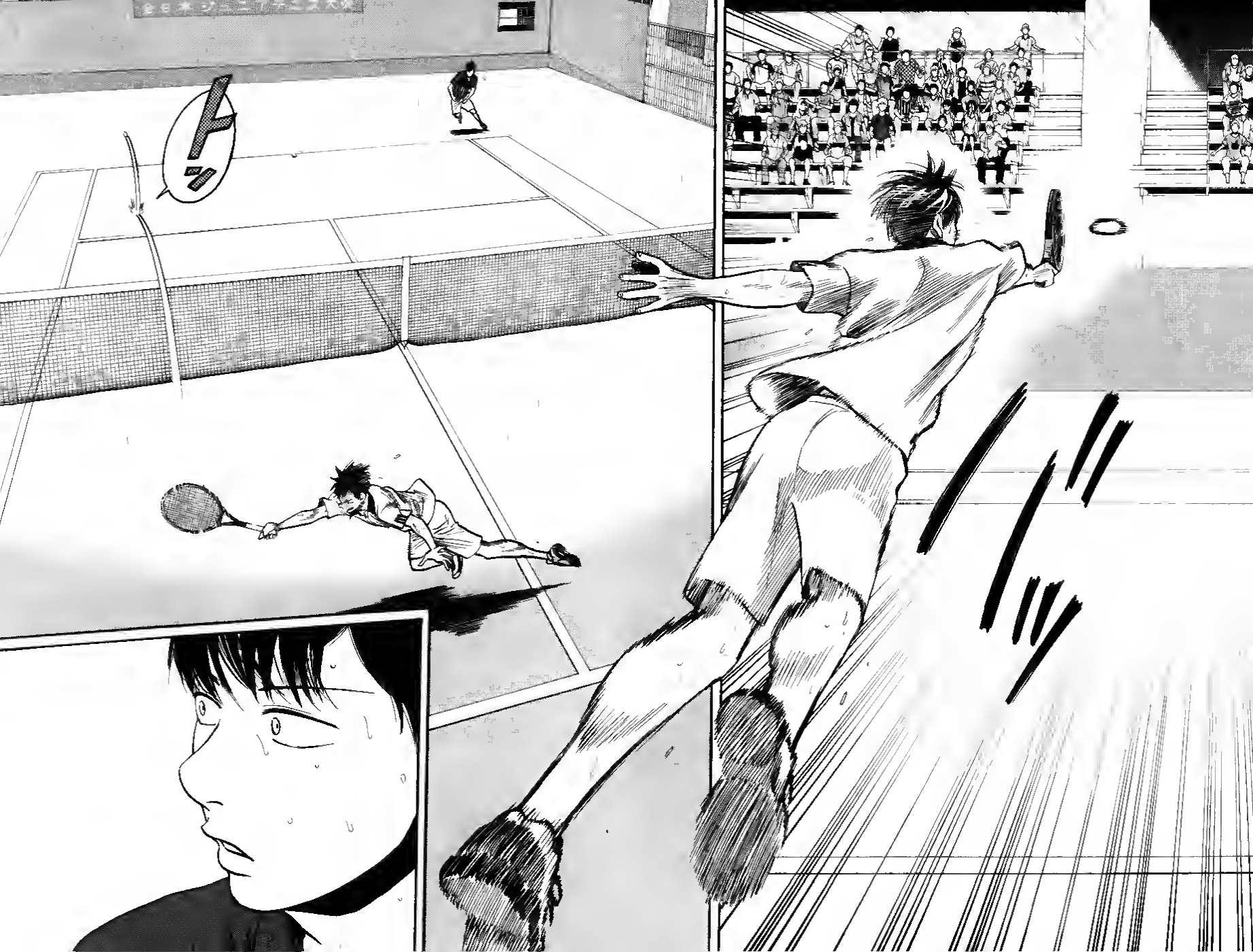
キュッ
HUH?
?!
EVEN THOUGH HE WAS IN A POSITION TO HIT IT, HE WENT WITH A NORMAL TOPSPIN INSTEAD...

AUGH... IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO NOT GET DISTRACTED BY THE JUMP SHOT...
KUH!
IT'S EVEN WEAKER THAN BEFORE... THIS IS THE CHANCE I CREATED!
HE'S GOING TO DO IT...
THIS IS IT!

WH-
WHAT?!

TWO IN A ROW... HE TOTALLY THREW OFF THE TIMING OF MY FOOTWORK.
A SLICE THAT ESCAPES TO THE SIDE?!
THAT WAS A PERFECTLY CONTROLLED SHOT . OGATA-KUN'S REACTION GOT DELAYED, TOO..
ALL HE CAN DO IS HIT IT DOWN THE LINE NOW!

CRAP.
CRAP..
HG
AB



GAME, SET,
AND MATCH.
WON BY MARUO.
COUNT: 3 - 6, 7 - 6, 8 - 6.

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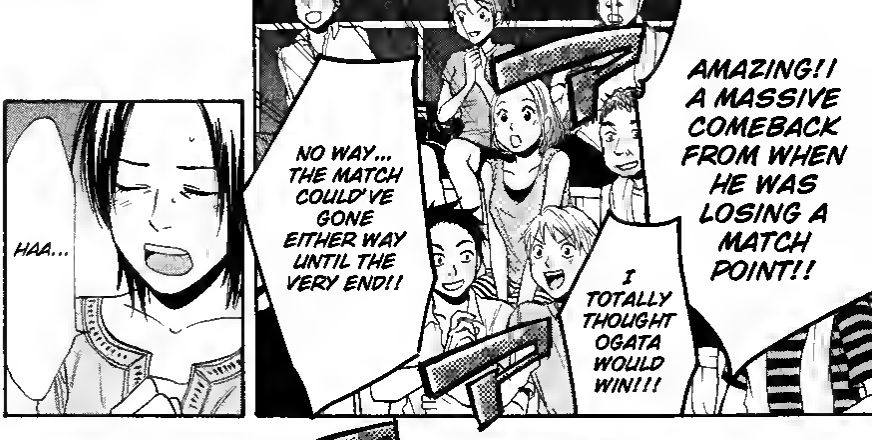
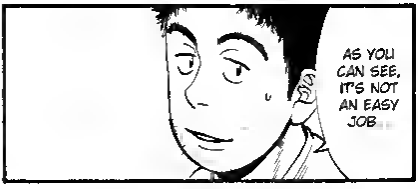
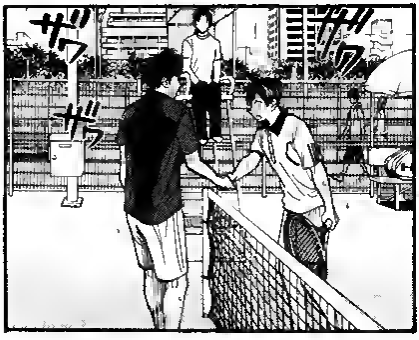
#233 VALUE OF VICTORY


HAA...
NO WAY... THE MATCH COULD'VE GONE EITHER WAY UNTIL THE VERY END!!
I TOTALLY THOUGHT OGATA WOULD WIN!!!
AMAZING!! A MASSIVE COMEBACK FROM WHEN HE WAS LOSING A MATCH POINT!!

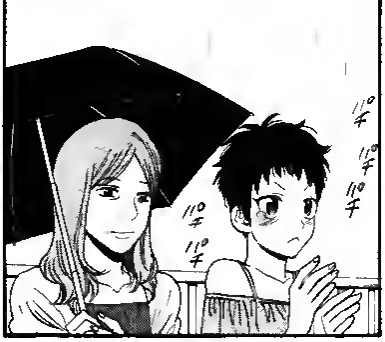
I'M TOTALLY EXHAUSTED, TOO.
IT'S AMAZING, ISN'T IT?!
HEY! EIICHIROU DID IT!


AS YOU CAN SEE, IT'S NOT AN EASY JOB...

THE BOY WANTS TO MAKE A LIVING WITH THIS...



I LOST BECAUSE I GOT AGITATED BY A POWER SHOT FROM AN OPPONENT WHO LACKS POWER...
BUT THIS IS WHY TENNIS IS SO FUN...
THERE ARE THESE KINDS OF TENNIS, TOO..
EVEN THOUGH YOU FINALLY CAME BACK, YOU DON'T SEEM SO SAD ABOUT LOSING



I WOULD'VE BEEN THE ONE WHO LOST IF I DIDN'T WIN THIS LAST GAME...
prince

I AM SAD...

BUT I DID EVERYTHING I CAN TO GET HERE AND I WON WHEN I NEEDED TO—
I OVERCAME THE WALL OF OGATA-KUN'S PHYSICAL ABILITY
WITH MY OWN TENNIS...

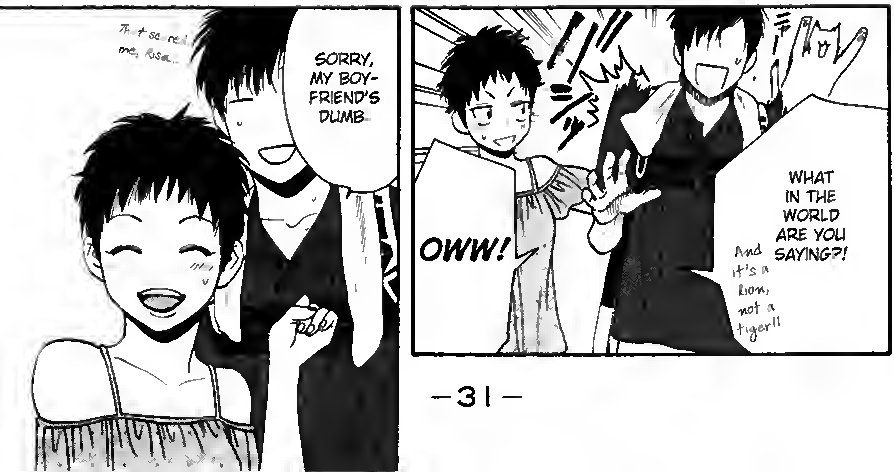
WHAT HE EARNED IN THIS MATCH IS HUGE...
NACCHAN.
NICE WORK!
AA
prince

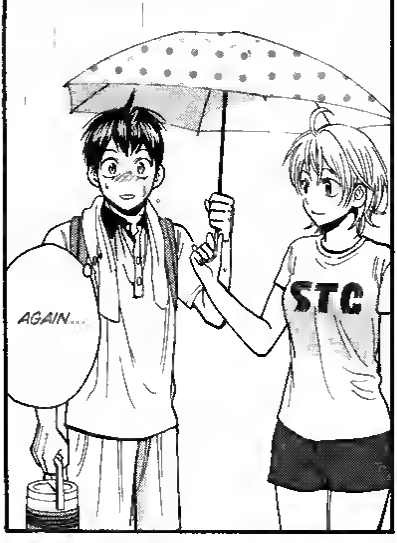
YUP!
WE FINALLY REACHED THE SEMI-FINALS!
YOU'RE MORE CONFIDENT THAN EVER...
I CAN'T BE LOSING WHEN EI-CHAN'S WORKING SO HARD, RIGHT?
AH, I'LL HOLD IT
IT'S OKAY IT'S OKAY
WE'RE BOTH IN THE TOP 4~♪
OH, CONGRATS!
IT'S BECAUSE EI-CHAN WON.
WE MIGHT AS WELL WIN TOGETHER!!!

I CAN'T BE SO SURE YET...
I CAN SAY IT FOR SURE NOW...
I'M GOING TO WIN!!
OGATA-KUN!
AH. MARUO-KUN.
I-IS THAT SO...
I TOLD YOU ABOUT MY INJURY BEFORE, RIGHT?
I THINK I MANAGED TO TRULY COME BACK TO THIS WORLD OF COMPETITION THANKS TO THIS MATCH.
HUH?
I LOST, BUT I WAS REALLY LUCKY.
GEEZ, I'M SO GLAD I WAS ABLE TO PLAY YOU TODAY.

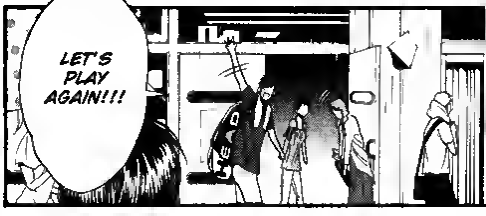
THANK YOU FOR WAKING THE SLEEPING TIGER.

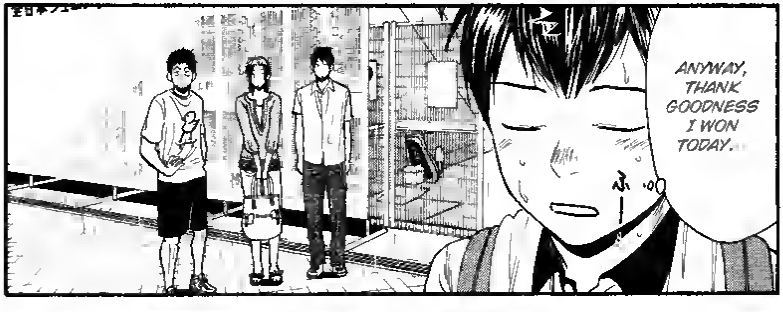
WHAT...?

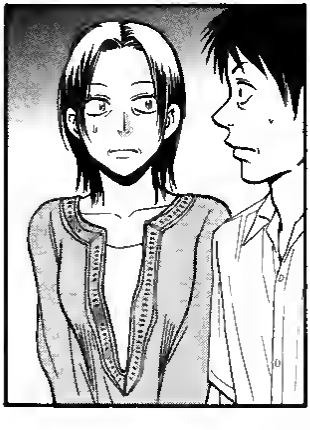

WHAT IN THE WORLD ARE YOU SAYING?!
And it's a lion, not a tiger!!
OWW!
SORRY, MY BOY-FRIEND'S DUMB-
That se...ns me, Risa...


AGAIN...
STC

OGATA-KUN'S TOTALLY GETTING PUSHED AROUND...
OKAY.
COME ON, YOU NEED TO CHANGE BEFORE YOUR BODY GETS COLD!

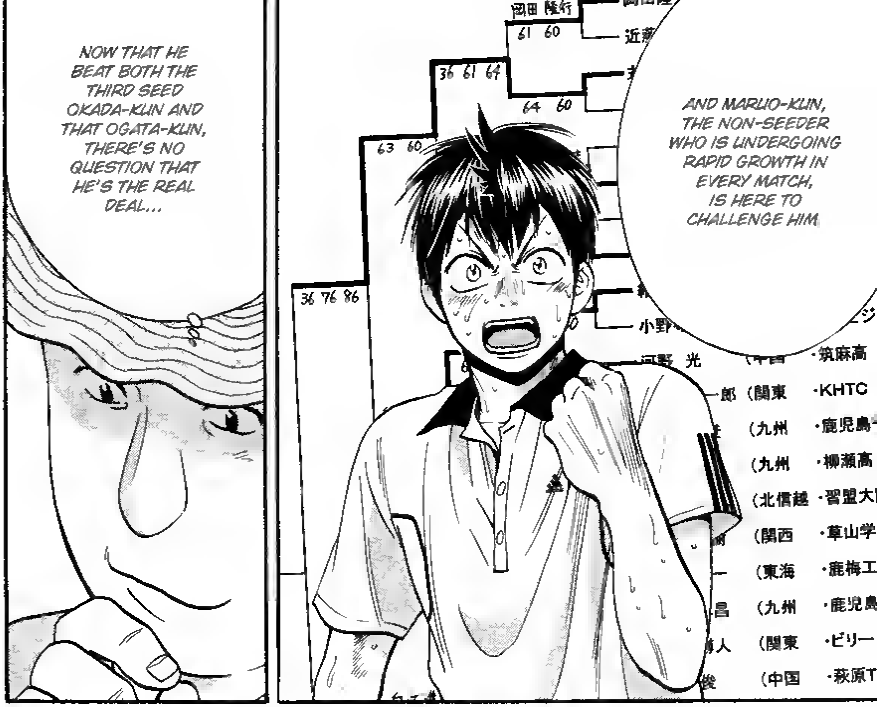

LET'S PLAY AGAIN!!!

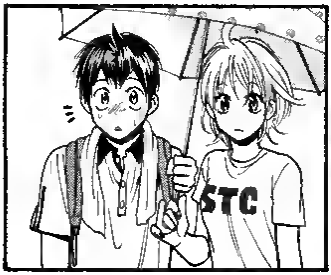

ANYWAY, THANK GOODNESS I WON TODAY...



HE NEEDS TO BEAT TWO MORE IF HE WANTS TO WIN, RIGHT?
ARE THOSE TWO GOING TO BE STRONGER THAN HIS OPPONENT TODAY?
LET'S SEE... WELL THEY DEFINITELY AREN'T WEAKER...

THIS YEAR'S SEMI-FINALS IS EVEN MORE EXCITING!
WE FINALLY HAVE THE TOP 4 FOR BOTH MEN'S AND WOMEN'S...
THE FIRST SEED NABAE-KUN WHO BEAT SUMIYOSHI-KUN AFTER A VERY CLOSE MATCH,
ARAYA-KUN, WHO GRASPED SOMETHING FROM BEATING NABAE-KUN IN THE KANTO JUNIOR,
BEAT THE FOURTH SEED HIROSE-KUN, AND NOW THEY'RE GOING ON A REMATCH AT THE NATIONALS.
ON THE OTHER HAND, THE SECOND SEED KANDA-KUN BEAT HIS UPPERCLASSMAN FROM THE SAME SCHOOL, SHIRAE-KUN, AND ADVANCED TO THE SEMI-FINALS AGAIN JUST LIKE LAST YEAR...


NOW THAT HE BEAT BOTH THE THIRD SEED OKADA-KUN AND THAT OGATA-KUN, THERE'S NO QUESTION THAT HE'S THE REAL DEAL...
AND MARUO-KUN, THE NON-SEEDER WHO IS UNDERGOING RAPID GROWTH IN EVERY MATCH, IS HERE TO CHALLENGE HIM.
岡田 隆行
61 60
36 61 64
64 60
63 60
36 76 86
小野
光
・筑麻高
(関東
・KHTC
(九州
・鹿児島
(九州
・柳瀬高
(北信越
・習盟大
(関西
・草山学
(東海
・鹿梅工
(九州
・鹿児島
人
(関東
・ビリー
(中国
・萩原T


STC

BEACUSE IT'S HIS FIRST NATIONALS AND HE'S HAD ZERO REPUTATION BEFORE, ALL THE UNIVERSITIES AND CORPORATE SPONSORS CAN'T HELP BUT PAY ATTENTION TO HIM.

AH...
WHAT'S UP, BOY GENIUS?

THERE AREN'T THAT MANY GENIUSES, YOU KNOW. I'M TALKING ABOUT YOU, MARUO-KUN...
HUH, ME?!
I'VE NEVER BEEN CALLED A GENIUS BEFORE...
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? ONLY A GENIUS CAN GET THIS FAR IN JUST TWO YEARS OF TENNIS.
I TOLD YOU BEFORE TOO, BUT I'M QUITE INTERESTED IN STC'S SCIENTIFIC AND HIGHLY EFFCIENT TRAININGS
MY PLACE IS A SUPER OLD-FASHION, DO-OR-DIE TYPE OF ENVIRONMENT, SO I'M JEALOUS.
WELL, WE HAVE OUR OWN STRENGTHS TOO, BUT I GUESS THE GRASS LOOKS GREENER ON THE OTHER SIDE..
I MEAN, IT'S ALL THANKS TO THEM THAT YOUR GENIUS BORE FRUIT, RIGHT?
AH, BUT IT MUST BE TOUGH TO WORK IN A CLUB SINCE YOU ARE ALWAYS BY YOURSELF.
I ALWAYS HAD THE SUPPORT OF MY TEAMMATES...

I'M GLAD THAT IT WAS YOU WHO EMBODIES THE SPIRIT OF KABAI'S TENNIS TEAM.
KANDA.. I'M GLAD YOU WERE MY LAST OPPONENT IN MY HIGH SCHOOL CAREER...
I ENTRUST KABAI'S TENNIS ON TO YOU...
I'LL BE SHOULDERING A BUNCH OF THINGS TOMORROW.
SO IT MIGHT GET A BIT NOISY. BUT DON'T BE TOO CONCERNED.

MORE IMPOR-TANTLY...
I, TOO...
SHOULDERING THINGS...
スッ
STC
TO A GUY WHO'S FLIRTING WITH A GIRL RIGHT AFTER THE MATCH!
THERE'S NO WAY IN HELL I'M GOING TO LOSE

カぁぁ
ぁ
YOU GO ON BARKING AT YOUR OPPONENT THE MOMENT I LET YOU OUT OF MY SIGHT?
YOU ARE KABAI'S DISGRACE...
ケホ
ケホ
AH... YOU'RE BLUSHING NOW?! DAMNIT...
THERE'S NO MORE RAIN, YOU KNOW...
ARGH!!
SHOW RESPECT TO YOUR OPPONENT AND APOLOGIZE!! OTHERWISE THERE'S PUNISHMENT!!!
Y-YES, SIR!!

I'M SORRY! LET'S HAVE A FAIR MATCH TOMOR-ROW!
Y-YES! SAME HERE.
SEE YOU TOMOR-ROW!

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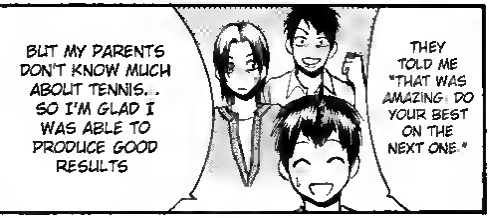
TOMORROW IS FINALLY THE SEMI-FINALS...

YES...
ALL THAT'S LEFT IS HOW YOU WILL REACT TO WHAT'S HAPPENING ON THE COURT.
AREN'T YOU DONE COMING UP WITH STRATEGIES AGAINST KANDA?

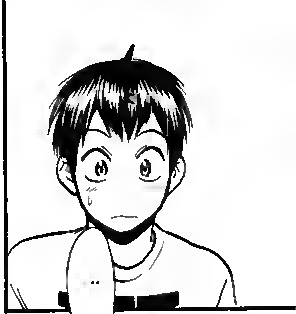

BUT MY PARENTS DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT TENNIS. . SO I'M GLAD I WAS ABLE TO PRODUCE GOOD RESULTS
THEY TOLD ME "THAT WAS AMAZING. DO YOUR BEST ON THE NEXT ONE."

DID THEY SAY ANYTHING?
BY THE WAY, YOUR PARENTS WERE REALLY HEATED UP WHEN THEY WERE CHEERING FOR YOUR MATCH.
MENTALLY FINISH

It was their first time watching? to...
WELL BETTER TELL THEM HOW AMAZING IT IS FOR YOU TO EVEN COME THIS FAR.

#234 HOPE

DO I HAVE TALENT?
HUH?
WHAT'S WRONG? YOU FEELING COCKY?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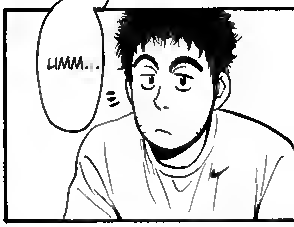
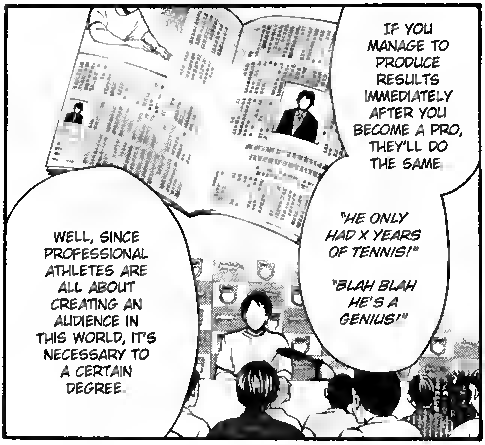
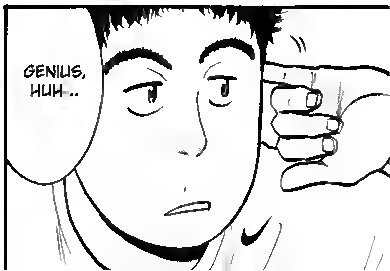

UMM...

DON'T GET TOO CAUGHT UP WITH IT...
WHEN PEOPLE CALL SOMEONE A "GENIUS", IT'S JUST A WAY OF EXPRESSING SOMEONE WHO IS SKILLED...

NO, NOT AT ALL, BUT...
KANDA-KUN CALLED ME A "GENIUS" SO...


IF YOU MANAGE TO PRODUCE RESULTS IMMEDIATELY AFTER YOU BECOME A PRO, THEY'LL DO THE SAME.
"HE ONLY HAD X YEARS OF TENNIS!"
"BLAH BLAH HE'S A GENIUS!"
WELL, SINCE PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES ARE ALL ABOUT CREATING AN AUDIENCE IN THIS WORLD, IT'S NECESSARY TO A CERTAIN DEGREE.


GENIUS, HUH...

JUST REPLACE THE WORD "TALENT" WITH "LUCK".
SO IF YOU THINK YOU WILL BE BOTHERED BY WORDS LIKE "GENIUS" OR "TALENT"...
BUT THERE'S NO POINT IN GETTING INFLUENCED BY THOSE WORDS.
REGARDLESS OF THE INTENTION, YOU SHOULD KEEP IT TO THAT LEVEL.
IF IT'S "I'M SO JEALOUS OF YOUR TALENT.", THEN IT'S "I'M SO JEALOUS OF YOUR GOOD FORTUNE."
IF YOU HEAR "YOU'RE A GENIUS!" JUST REPLACE IT WITH "YOU'RE SO LUCKY!"
I FEEL A LOT BETTER NOW...
THANK YOU SO MUCH...
I MEAN, YOU REALLY ARE FORTUNATE, RIGHT?
OF COURSE, THAT WASN'T THE ONLY THING.
GOOD
HIGH GLOSS

THEN GO GET SOME REST FOR TODAY.
YES.
ONLY TWO LEFT UNTIL I WIN...
WE MIGHT AS WELL WIN TOGETHER!!
MENTALLY FINISH

DID SHE GO TO BED ALREADY?
I WANTED TO TALK TO HER A BIT...
BUT I SHOULDN'T WAKE HER UP...
プルルルル
SHE WON'T ANS-WER...
プルルルル
HUH? SHE USUALLY CALLS AT ABOUT THIS TIME...
LET'S GET SOME WATER AND GO TO SLEEP
HUH? NACCHAN?
SHE WAS AWAKE...

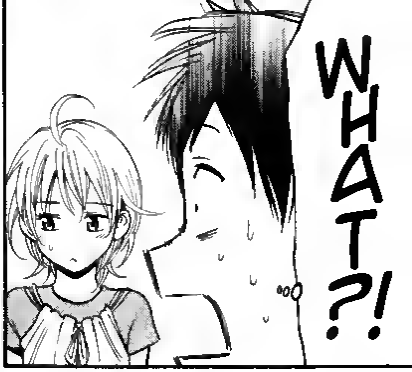
チン
AH~
NACCHAN!
ドクッ
GOOD NIGHT~
カリ
T-THAT WAS TOTALLY STRNAGE..
IS SHE AVOIDING ME...?
EHH!?!

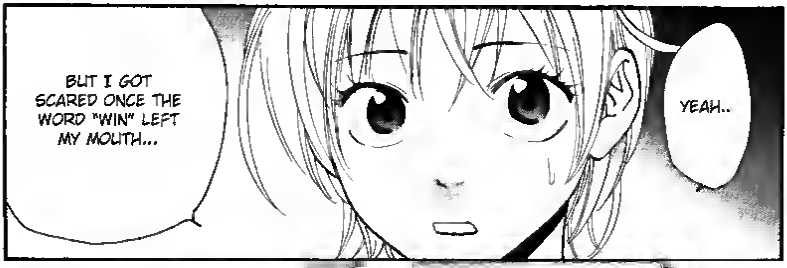
SHE DOESN'T HAVE HER PHONE?
IF SHE'S NOT IN THE LOBBY...
OUTSIDE... WHERE DID SHE GO?
PPPPP
PPPPP
2
DOWN... SHE WENT TO THE LOBBY?
THERE SHE IS!
はッ
HIGH GLOSS
MENTALLY FINISH
LET'S BE RATIONAL FOR A BIT...
ふと冷静
AREN'T I FOLLOWING HER TOO MUCH...?
AM I BEING A STALKER?
WAIT A SEC...!
NACCH-
トロ

NACCHAN.
WAIT, WAIT... I DON'T NEED TO BE SO WORRIED, RIGHT?
WE'RE GOING OUT ANYWAY...
... AND I JUST WANT TO KNOW WHERE SHE'S GOING!
EI-CHAN...
SORRY FOR CATCHING YOU OFF-GUARD BEFORE ..
I JUST WANTED TO KNOW WHERE YOU WERE GOING THIS LATE AT NIGHT...
IS THAT SO...?
ホッ
I'LL GO WITH YOU.
HUH?
ニコリ
OH, YOU WERE WORRIED? THANK YOU...
BUT I'M FINE... I'M JUST GOING FOR A WALK.

I DON'T THINK YOU SHOULD COME...
スー
ナデナデ
HUH?! W-WHY?!
CAUSE...
I DON'T WANT YOU TO BE AFFECTED...
...what?
I DON'T WANT MY ANXIETY...
CARRYING OVER TO EI-CHAN.

今はもうハッキリと言えるんだ
私は絶対優勝する！
YOU WERE FULL OF CONFIDENCE IN THE AFTERNOON.
ANXIETY?


WHAT?!


BUT I GOT SCARED ONCE THE WORD "WIN" LEFT MY MOUTH...
YEAH..

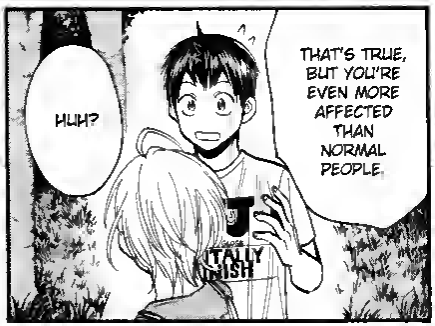
I WANT TO SOMEHOW TAKE AWAY NACCHAN'S ANXIETY...
EVEN THOUGH I SAID IT SO LOUDLY
THAT'S RIGHT, NACCHAN...
THERE ARE TIMES WHEN SHE FEELS WEAK IN FIRST MATCHES...
IS CONSIDERED TO HAVE A GENIUS MENTALITY, BUT...

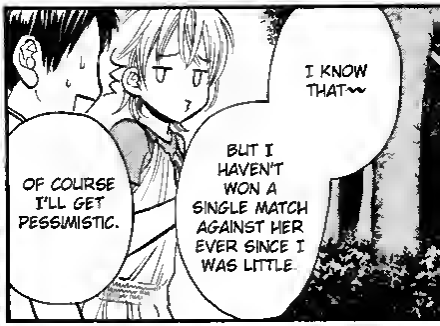
IN MY CASE...
I TRY TO WRITE DETAILED DESCRIPTIONS ABOUT MY FEARS IN MY NOTES.
HMM... THAT TOTALLY SUITS YOU.
WHY DON'T YOU TRY IT, TOO?
AH... THERE'S NO PEN AND PAPER...
MY NEXT OPPONENT, MOMOYAMA HARUKA-SAN,
IS AN OPPONENT I'VE BEEN PLAYING SINCE GRADE SCHOOL, AND WE'VE BEEN GOING BACK AND FORTH SO MY CHANCES ARE ABOUT 50-50.
I'LL GO RUN AND GET IT.
HUH? IT'S FINE!!
CAN YOU HEAR ME OUT INSTEAD?
MENTALLY FINISH
WE BOTH KNOW OUR STYLES VERY WELL.
BUT CONSIDERING HOW WELL I'VE BEEN DOING RECENTLY, I THINK I CAN BEAT HER IF I PLAY NORMALLY...
IT'S JUST THAT...

EVEN THOUGH I'VE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO BEAT AKI-CHAN.
SHE BEAT AKI-CHAN ONCE THIS SEASON...
BUT YOU BEAT SHIMIZU-SAN BEFORE TOO, RIGHT? EVEN THOUGH IT WAS JUST PRACTICE...
I HAVEN'T WATCHED IT, SO I DON'T KNOW...
I SEE... DO YOU KNOW HOW SHE WON?
THEN WHAT IF SHIMIZU-SAN WASN'T HER USUAL SELF WHEN SHE WAS FIGHTING MOMOYAMA-SAN, TOO?
THAT WASN'T LIKE THE REAL AKI-CHAN. .
THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE.

LOOKS LIKE NACCHAN'S PROBLEM IS MORE WITH SHIMIZU-SAN THAN MOMOYAMA-SAN
OF COURSE AKI-CHAN HAS HER GOOD DAYS AND BAD DAYS, BUT...
I CAN'T IMAGINE HER LETTING HERSELF DOWN ON AN OFFICIAL MATCH...
HOW? UMM... SHE HAS NO OPENINGS, AND SHE'S TOTALLY FLAWLESS ON BOTH OFFENSE AND DEFENSE.
SHE USUALLY WINS BY DOMINATING HER OPPONENTS EARLY ON AND THEN MAINTAINING THAT LEAD TILL THE END..
SHE'S ALWAYS CALM AND NEVER SHOWS HER EMOTIONS, SO IT'S SCARY BECAUSE YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT SHE'S GOING TO DO...
THAT... MIGHT BE TRUE.
EXACTLY HOW STRONG IS SHIMIZU-SAN?
I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT GIRLS, BUT. .
I CAN'T SEE SHIMIZU-SAN BEING FLAWLESS AND PERFECT. .
IN FACT, I FEEL LIKE SHE'S MORE OF AN AWK-WARD KIND
UMM ..

DON'T YOU THINK THAT YOU'RE TOO PESSIMISTIC ABOUT YOUR CHANCES AGAINST SHIMIZU-SAN?


HUH?
THAT'S TRUE, BUT YOU'RE EVEN MORE AFFECTED THAN NORMAL PEOPLE.


I KNOW THAT〜
BUT I HAVEN'T WON A SINGLE MATCH AGAINST HER EVER SINCE I WAS LITTLE.
OF COURSE I'LL GET PESSIMISTIC.

IF YOU CAN SUBCONSCIOUSLY MAINTAIN THAT STATE, THEN IT MIGHT BE THE SAME FOR YOUR PESSIMISTIC ATTITUDE, TOO...
IN MY CASE, I KEEP LOOKING FOR THINGS TO STAY CONFIDENT AND TRY TO CONVINCE MYSELF OVER AND OVER AGAIN.

I THINK PEOPLE WHO ARE NATURALLY STRONG SPIRITED AND CAN MAINTAIN HIGH CONFIDENCE DURING THEIR GAME,
ARE MORE LIKELY TO FALL PREY TO A FIXED MINDSET.

DON'T BE SO AGITATED.
I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHAT YOU SHOULD DO IF THAT'S THE CASE...
WELL, I GUESS SO...
BUT, UMM... SORRY...
ARGH!
SO YOU'RE TELLING ME I'M JUST IMAGINING THINGS?
YUP.
I'LL DEFINITELY FEEL BETTER IF I CAN TELL MYSELF I'M JUST IMAGINING THINGS.
I FEEL A LOT BETTER JUST BY KNOWING THAT.
BUT YOU MAY BE RIGHT.
ALSO, THERE'S ONE MORE THING I'M AFRAID ABOUT...

HUH...?
I FELT LIKE I WAS GETTING LEFT BEHIND BY EI-CHAN...
JUST LIKE SOU-CHAN,
YOU MIGHT KEEP MOVING AHEAD AND KEEP GOING FARTHER AND FARTHER AWAY FROM ME...
NO WAY...
MENTALLY FINISH
ドキッ
THAT'S...!
THE REASON I SAY "LET'S WIN TOGETHER"
ISN'T JUST BECAUSE I WANT US TO WIN.
BUT BECAUSE I WANT US TO STAY TOGETHER MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE.

MY FUTURE IS FULL OF WORRIES AND THINGS I DON'T KNOW,
AND I KEEP WORRYING ABOUT GETTING SEPARATED FROM NACCHAN BY TIME OR DISTANCE...
NO ONE CAN GUARANTEE THAT IT WON'T HAPPEN...
IT'S THE SAME FOR ME, TOO!!
BUT EVEN IF THAT HAPPENS.. NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS...
.. I PLAN ON STAYING TOGETHER WITH NACCHAN.
AH, BUT THIS ISN'T A FEAR.
IT'S A WISH..

MOVED ON TO THEIR SECOND STORE FOR THE "GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER" PARTY. (SUGGESTED BY NATSU'S DAD.)
DURING THAT MOMENT, THE PARENTS...

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imangascans
rc.rchighway.net

Baby Steps

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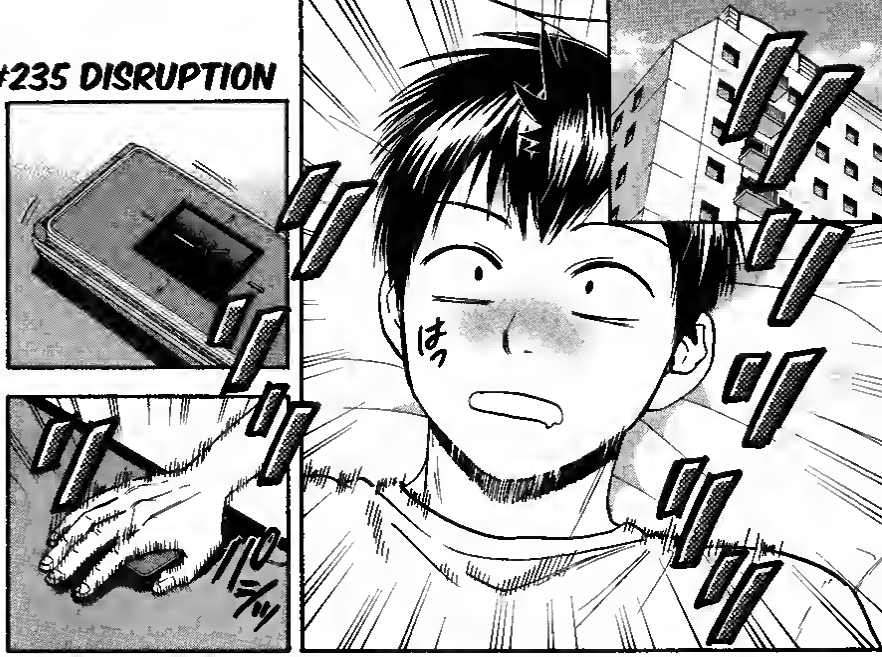
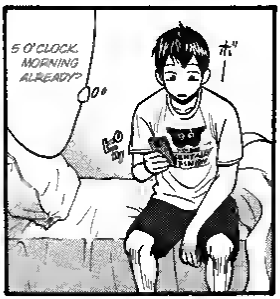
...
...
...
UH...
Ouch
痛っ
UM...
S SORRY, SO SUDDENLY...
NA-
NA-
NACCHAN...
ミル
Baby Steps
ベイビーステップ

#235 DISRUPTION

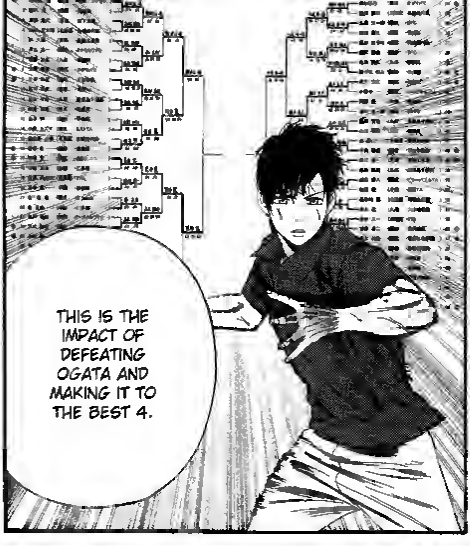




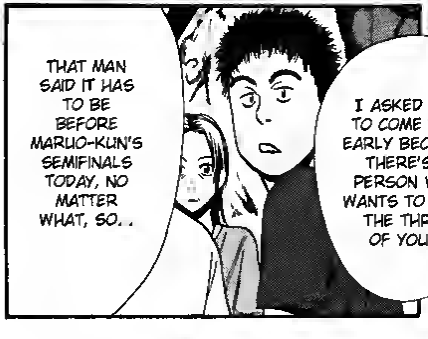
RII IN- N- NG G
ビリリリ
A CALL THIS EARLY!?
H- HELLO?
SORRY FOR CALLING SO EARLY. DID YOU SLEEP WELL?
I-I'M FINE. WHAT'S UP?
?
WELL, YESTERDAY I GOT A CALL FROM STC. AFTER THAT...
A LITTLE SOMETHING HAS COME UP THAT I HAVE TO TELL YOU AND YOUR PARENTS ABOUT, SO COME TO THE LOBBY TWO HOURS FROM NOW.
WITH MY PARENTS? WHAT'S IT ABOUT?
TO PUT IT SIMPLY, VARIOUS MATTERS CONCERNING YOUR FUTURE HAVE POPPED UP.
?!

OH, HERE YOU ARE!
GOOD MORNING.
RIGHT.
WELL THEN, EXCUSE ME...

STC HAS BEEN CONTACTED BY A NUMBER OF UNIVERSITIES THAT WANT TO SIGN UP MARUO-KUN.
YOU SEE, THIS IS ABOUT YESTERDAY'S MATTER.
ALMOST ALL WILL GUARANTEE ADMISSION WITH JUST A SHORT ESSAY AND AN INTERVIEW. IT SEEMS THERE ARE ALSO SCHOOLS THAT WILL PROVIDE SCHOLARSHIPS ON RECOMMENDATION...
AS WELL AS SOME SCHOOLS OUTSIDE DIVISION I THAT WANT TO STRENGTHEN THEIR TENNIS CLUBS.
SPECIFICALLY, COLLEGE DIVISION I CLUBS KEIRYOU UNIVERSITY, DAINIHON UNIVERSITY, KYOURITSU UNIVERSITY...
WELL I'M GRATEFUL, BUT...
I KNOW, YOUR AMBITION IS TO BE A PRO, RIGHT?
AREN'T THOSE TOP-NOTCH UNIVERSITIES...?
KEIRYOU UNIVERSITY, DAINIHON UNIVERSITY...
...


THIS IS THE IMPACT OF DEFEATING OGATA AND MAKING IT TO THE BEST 4.

YOU SAID YOUR GRADES DROPPED,
BUT IT'S AMAZING, ISN'T IT?
BUT ON THE CONTRARY, YOU'RE RECEIVING INVITATIONS FROM SCHOOLS.


THAT MAN SAID IT HAS TO BE BEFORE MARUO-KUN'S SEMIFINALS TODAY, NO MATTER WHAT, SO. .
I ASKED YOU TO COME THIS EARLY BECAUSE THERE'S A PERSON WHO WANTS TO MEET THE THREE OF YOU...

I APOLOGIZE FOR CALLING YOU OUT SO EARLY IN THE MORNING...

AH, YOU CAME AT THE RIGHT TIME!

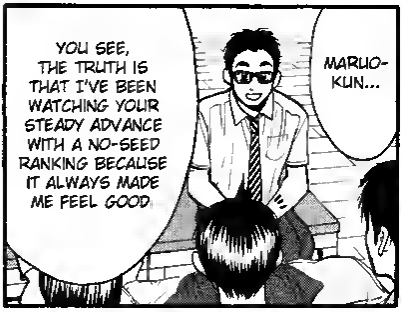
GOOD MORNING!
SORRY FOR CALLING YOU OUT SO EARLY! PLEASED TO MEET YOU! MY NAME IS SUDOU OF ELLESSE.
AH... THANKS.
ARE YOU THE FATHER? FIRST, MY CARD ..
Th-Thanks.
MARUO-KUN, I ALWAYS WATCH YOUR MATCHES.
?
ELLESSE IS THE MAKER OF SOME OF THE TENNIS WEAR I OWN...
ISN'T IT?
THAT'S RIGHT! THANK YOU!

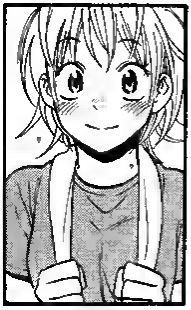
ACTUALLY, I'VE BEEN CHECKING MARUO-KUN EVEN BEFORE THAT ONOZAWA-SAN OF PRINCE HAS,
EVER SINCE YOU PLAYED THAT REALLY CLOSE MATCH WITH IDE-KUN IN THE SECOND ROUND OF THE KANTOU JUNIORS.
DESPITE THAT, HE GOT AHEAD OF ME IN APPROACHING YOU...
SUDOU-SAN.. IT'S FINE, SO PLEASE GET STRAIGHT TO THE POINT.
Y- YOU'RE RIGHT, I SUPPOSE...
SINCE YOU SAID TO GET STRAIGHT TO THE POINT,
FOR STARTERS, I CAME WITH A REQUEST...
THAT IN THE EVENT MARUO-KUN HAS DECIDED TO TURN PRO, WE WANT YOU TO DISCUSS A SPORTSWEAR CONTRACT WITH OUR COMPANY FIRST.
STC

I HOPED THAT I COULD LOAN THESE TO MARUO-KUN...
AND IF YOU DON'T MIND, WOULD YOU BE SO KIND AS TO COMPETE IN THE SEMIFINALS WEARING OUR COMPANY'S LATEST SPORTS WEAR...?
A CONTRACT..
EVEN THOUGH I STILL HAVEN'T DECIDED ON MY CAREER...
OF COURSE WE KNOW THAT.
SO THE REASON I DISTURBED YOU THIS EARLY TODAY IS BECAUSE...
ガサゴソ
OF COURSE!
MAY I WEAR THEM...?
THESE...
WE SOUGHT NOT ONLY IN OUTSTANDING BREATHABILITY AND QUICK-DRYING PROPERTIES, BUT ALSO STYLE. THIS LINE IS A PRODUCT OUR COMPANY HAS CONFIDENCE IN...

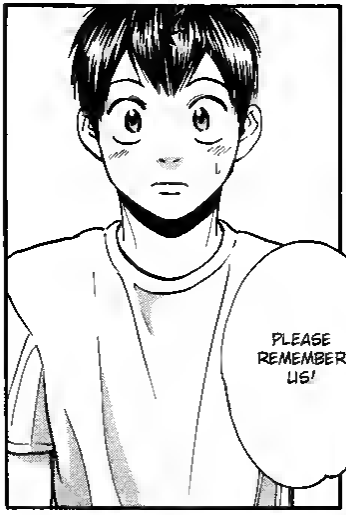
OH, MORNING.
AH, GOOD MORNING!

HEY... STOP IT ALREADY...
WHEN THIS MAN STARTS TALKING, HE DOESN'T STOP.


YOU SEE, THE TRUTH IS THAT I'VE BEEN WATCHING YOUR STEADY ADVANCE WITH A NO-SEED RANKING BECAUSE IT ALWAYS MADE ME FEEL GOOD.
MARUO-KUN...



STC


PLEASE REMEMBER US!

IT'S WITH SUCH THOUGHTS THAT I'VE COME HERE.
WE WANT TO CHALLENGE THEM LIKE MARUO-KUN AND OVERCOME A HIGH WALL TOGETHER WITH MARUO-KUN...
WE'RE ALSO COMPETING WITH EVERYTHING WE HAVE AGAINST FAMOUS, BIG SPORTS BRANDS.

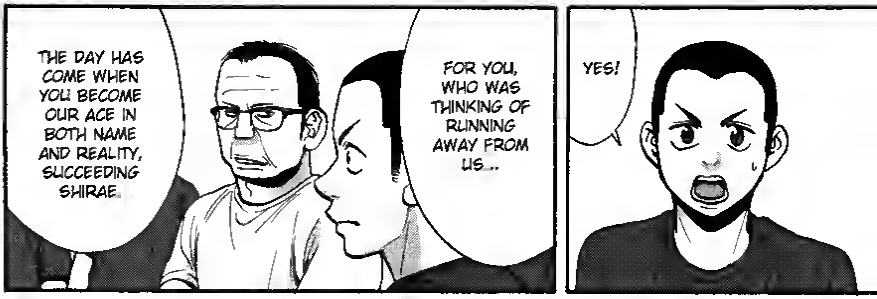
MY SURROUNDINGS ARE STARTING TO MOVE...
... IN THE DIRECTION I WANT.
MY PARENT'S HOPES...
AOI-SAN'S AND STC'S EXPECTATIONS...
THE PEOPLE ROOTING FOR ME...
MY FUTURE WITH NACCHAN...

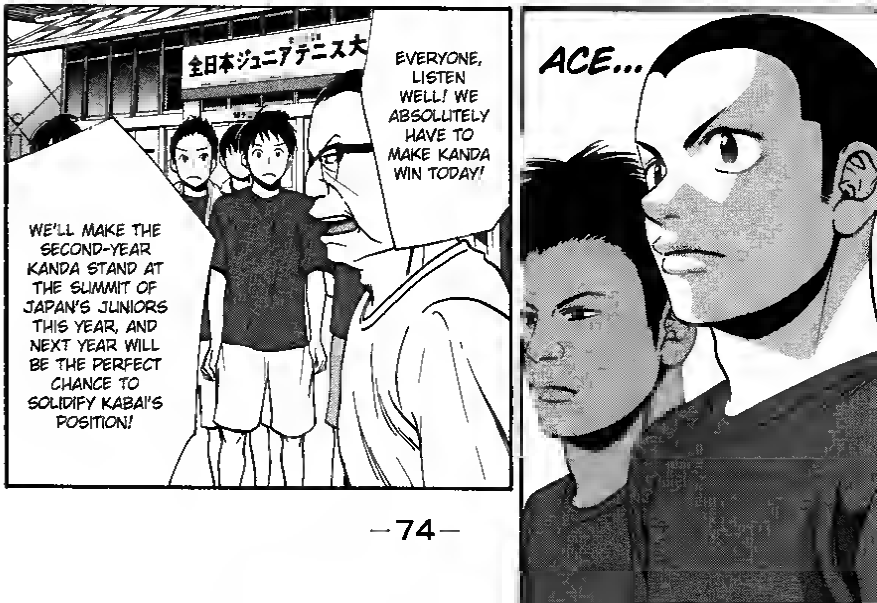
I MUST NOT STOP THIS TREND.
IN ORDER NOT TO STOP IT, I CAN ONLY WIN.

STC
I...

I'M THE ONE WHO SHOULD ASK YOU TO REMEMBER ME.
IT'S SO HOT TODAY, TOO...
全日本ジュニアテニス大会 'XX

YOU, ONE OF KABAI TECHNICAL, WITH ITS HISTORY, CAN'T LOSE TO THAT SORT OF GUY, YOU KNOW...?
YOUR OPPONENT TODAY HAS A SURPRISINGLY SHORT AMOUNT OF TENNIS EXPERIENCE, DOESN'T HE?
HMM ..? ARE YOU SAYING YOU'RE WORN OUT BY THIS MUCH?
AH... NO SIR, EXCUSE ME!


THE DAY HAS COME WHEN YOU BECOME OUR ACE IN BOTH NAME AND REALITY, SUCCEEDING SHIRAE.
FOR YOU, WHO WAS THINKING OF RUNNING AWAY FROM US...
YES!


全日本ジュニアテニス大
EVERYONE, LISTEN WELL! WE ABSOLUTELY HAVE TO MAKE KANDA WIN TODAY!
WE'LL MAKE THE SECOND-YEAR KANDA STAND AT THE SUMMIT OF JAPAN'S JUNIORS THIS YEAR, AND NEXT YEAR WILL BE THE PERFECT CHANCE TO SOLIDIFY KABAI'S POSITION!
ACE...

KANDA, AS THE ACE, DEMONSTRATE THE STRENGTH OF KABAI TENNIS!
AND EVERYONE WILL TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN TODAY'S VICTORY!!

MOM... I'M KIND OF GLAD I ENTERED KABAI...
OH, WHAT HAP-PENED?
WELL THE CRAPPY ENVIRONMENT IS THE SAME BUT I THINK I'VE GOTTEN STRONGER BOTH PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY
I'M STILL A SECOND YEAR, BUT I'LL DEFINITELY BECOME JAPAN'S BEST THIS YEAR
AND, YOU KNOW...
... I WANT TO GO ABROAD.
SO LET ME COME TO AMERICA THIS TIME.
... WHAT ABOUT SCHOOL?
I'LL DROP OUT, OF COURSE.
IF THE ACE SUDDENLY IS ABSENT MIDWAY THROUGH, LOTS OF THINGS MIGHT BE SAID, BUT...
...

I'M BEING LOOKED AT WEIRDLY...
ドキドキ

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#236 BATTLE OF THE ELITES
STC
ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR WAITING ROOM
It is now 10 o'clock. All players, please proceed to your assigned courts and begin warming up.
OKAY!

OOOI, EI-CHAN!
prince
KAGEYAMA! SASAKI-SAN CAME, TOO.
WE JUST MADE IT IN TIME!
AH, NACCHAN!
AH, IT'S KAGEYAMA-KUN AND HIME-CHAN!
WHY KAGEYAMA-KUN, HELLO.
AH! AUNTIE, IT'S BEEN AWHILE.
DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE LEAVING FROM HERE?
YEAH...
WELL, GETTING UP AT FOUR IN THE MORNING OR SOMETHING IS WAY TOO EARLY...
THANKS FOR COMING OUT AS FAR AS OSAKA!

YEAH!
YOU TWO ABSOLUTELY HAVE TO WIN!
EVERYONE IN SCHOOL IS ROOTING FOR YOU GUYS, SO...
THE NO-SEEDER MARUO BELONGS TO STC, WHICH IS WHERE IKE GOT INTO.
YESTERDAY'S MATCH WAS GREAT, I TELL YA. IT WAS AN UPSET VICTORY AFTER HE MANAGED TO TAKE MATCH POINT AGAINST THE FAVORITE, OGATA.
HE SUDDENLY APPEARED THIS YEAR, BUT JUST HOW STRONG IS HE?
AMAZING... HE BEAT OKADA TOO, I THINK... JUST WHAT IS HE?
STC

WHO WILL WIN TODAY ?!
SOMEHOW HE'S BECOMING A HUGE DEAL, YOU KNOW ..
WHA- WHAT?!
KANDA WILL!!!
YONEX

KANDA IS!!
HIS OPPONENT'S SCHOOL IS THE CHEERING SQUAD...?
WHO'S THE STRONGEST!?
THEY'RE CREATING AN AMAZING ATMOSPHERE. I GUESS THEY'VE PRACTICED...
IT'S OKAY. THERE ARE OTHERS BESIDES US ROOTING WHO ARE ROOTING FOR EI-CHAN TODAY.
KANDA, FIGHT!!

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THAT TIME OBVIOUSLY WASN'T THE USUAL YOU...
I WON BEFORE, BUT I DON'T THINK THAT WAS EVERYTHING YOU HAD...
CENTER COURT HAS THE SAME CARD AS THE KANTOU JUNIOR FINALS.
SOMEHOW, THERE'S BEEN A LOT OF TENSION SINCE WARM-UPS.
I'LL KNOCK YOU DOWN COMPLETELY!
IT PISSES ME OFF, I TELL YA...
EVEN NOW, YOU'RE ON THE SUMMIT... AFTER I DRAG OUT EVERYTHING YOU'VE GOT...

BUT HE ISN'T AN OPPONENT I CAN OVERCOME WITH JUST THAT...
IF I PLAY USING POWER AND SPEED, WITH A STRING TENSION OF ABOUT THIS MUCH...
ポン
ポン
ポン

IT'S OKAY...
I'M EASILY SWAYED...
MOMOYAMA-SAN AND AKI-CHAN ARE DIFFERENT...

SHE SUDDENLY STARTS CRYING AND SHE WON'T TELL ME THE REASON SHE'S A WORRY, I MUST SAY
BECAUSE I DON'T HAVE TO THINK ABOUT UNNECESSARY THINGS
I WANT TO BE ON A MATCH COURT ALL THE TIME

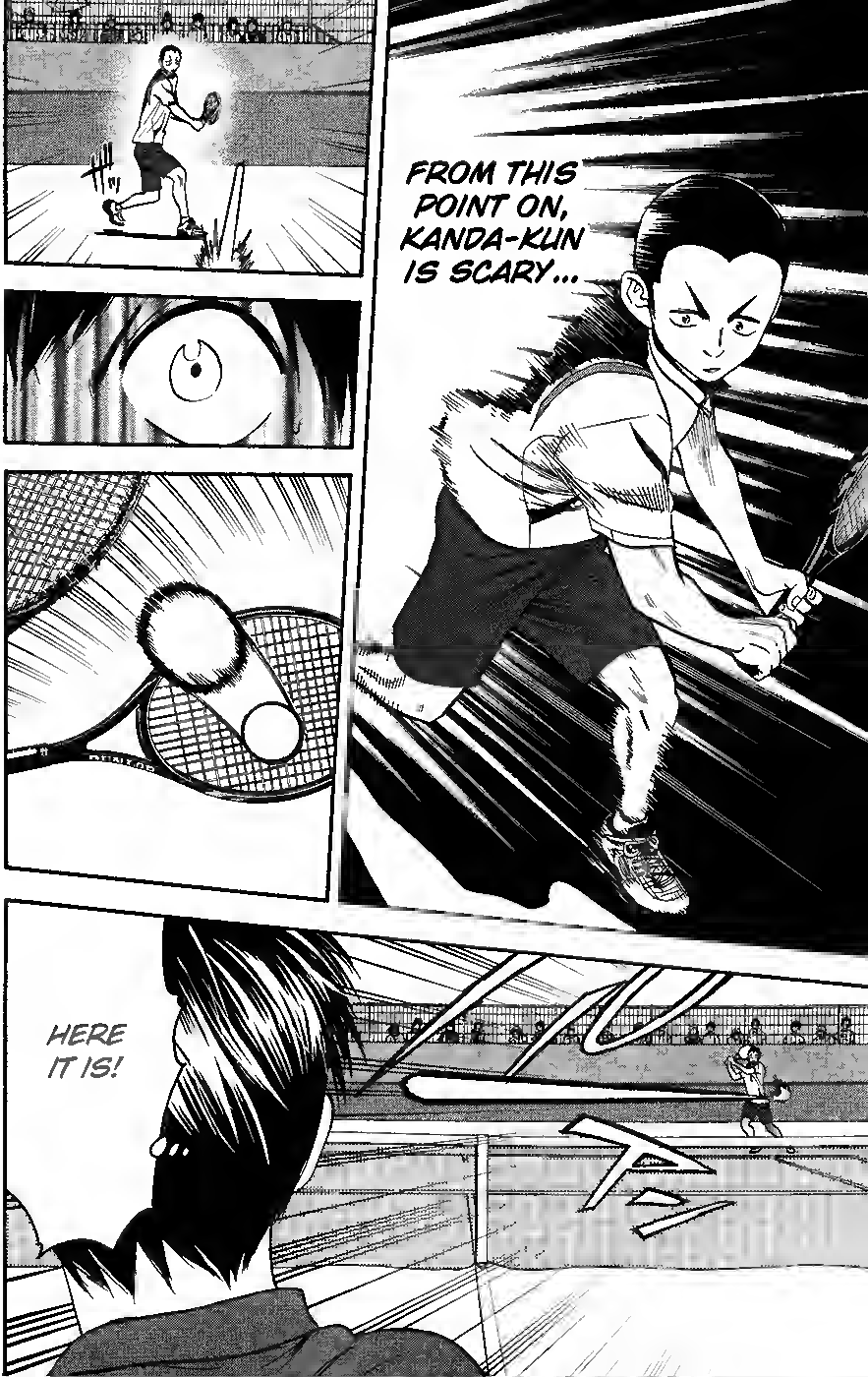
SOMEHOW.. SHE'S NOT HERSELF?
JUST WINNING IS FINE...
WE WILL NOW BEGIN THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR TENNIS TOURNAMENT'S...

SEMI-FINALS.
THE BEST OF THREE SET MATCH.

TIME!
Wilson

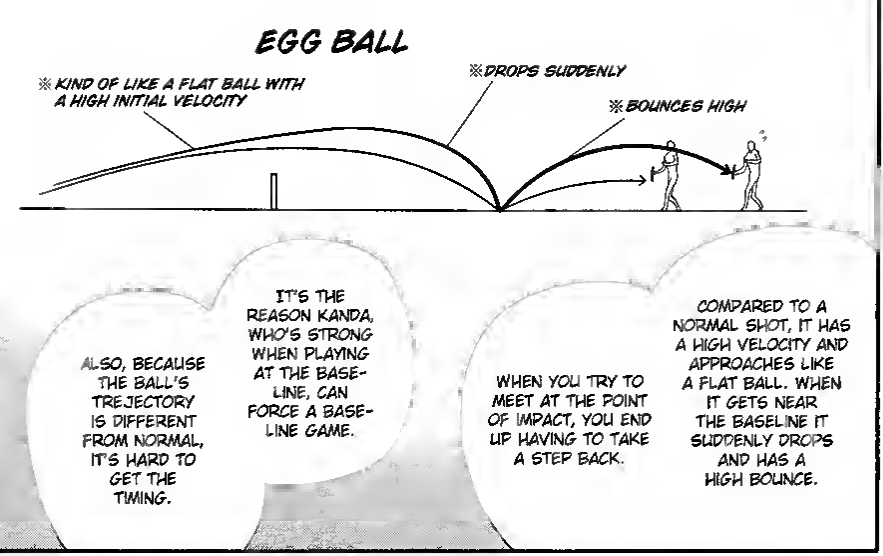
KANDA, SERVICE PLAY.
LET'S GO KANDA, FIRST POINT!

IT'S HEAVY. AND THERE'S A CUT SO THE COURSE IS GOOD, TOO
BUT I WAS ABLE TO RETURN IT TO A GOOD SPOT
HOWEVER
HE ISN'T AS FAST AS OKADA-KUN OR OGATA-KUN.

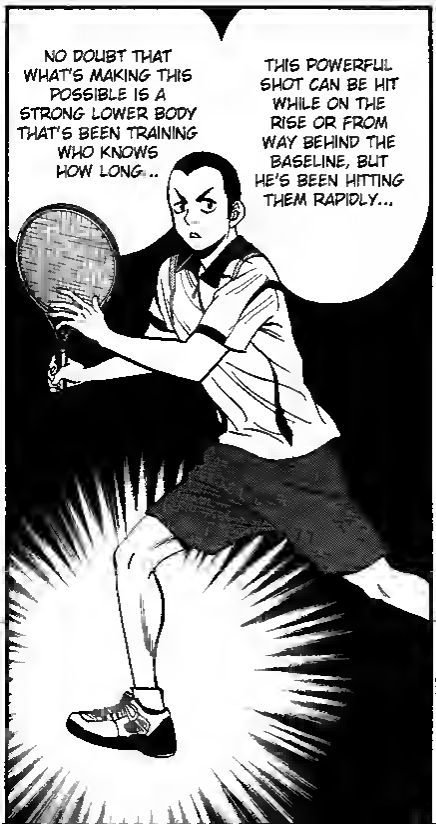

FROM THIS POINT ON, KANDA-KUN IS SCARY...
HERE IT IS!

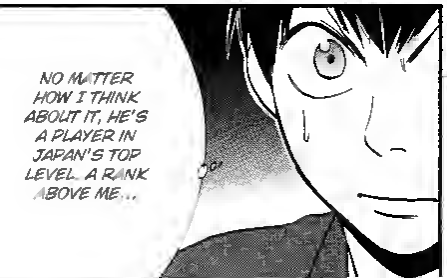
RGH
15 - 0.
THE CHANGE IN DIRECTION WAS DELAYED MY TIMING DOESN'T MATCH.

YES! NICE FIRST POINT, KANDA!!


EGG BALL
※KIND OF LIKE A FLAT BALL WITH A HIGH INITIAL VELOCITY
※DROPS SUDDENLY
※BOUNCES HIGH
ALSO, BECAUSE THE BALL'S TRAJECTORY IS DIFFERENT FROM NORMAL, IT'S HARD TO GET THE TIMING.
IT'S THE REASON KANDA, WHO'S STRONG WHEN PLAYING AT THE BASE-LINE, CAN FORCE A BASE-LINE GAME.
WHEN YOU TRY TO MEET AT THE POINT OF IMPACT, YOU END UP HAVING TO TAKE A STEP BACK.
COMPARED TO A NORMAL SHOT, IT HAS A HIGH VELOCITY AND APPROACHES LIKE A FLAT BALL. WHEN IT GETS NEAR THE BASELINE IT SUDDENLY DROPS AND HAS A HIGH BOUNCE.

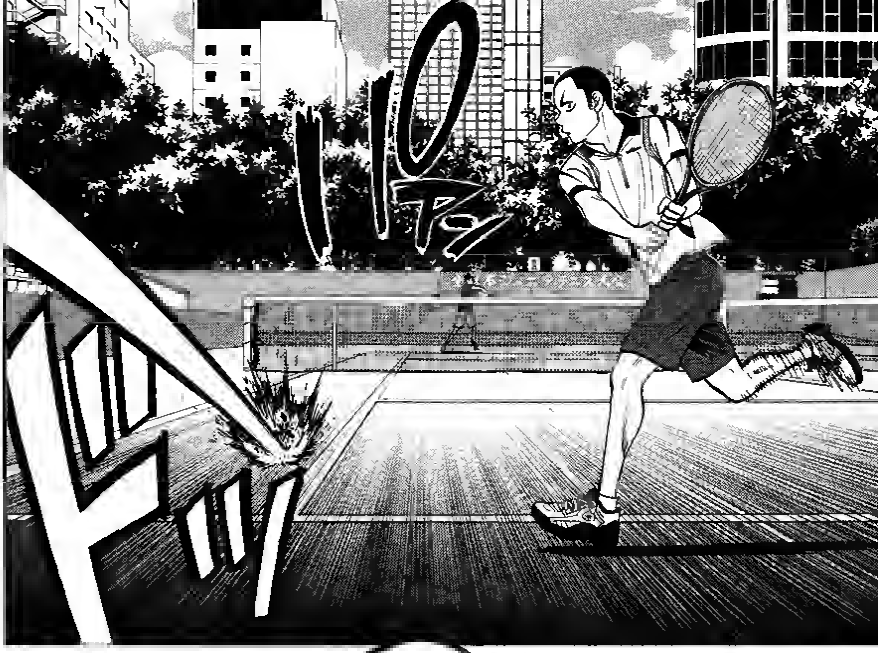
A STAMINA THAT WAS ENHANCED IN A RELENTLESS ENVIRONMENT AND THE MENTAL STRENGTH THAT ARAYA-KUN HAD MENTIONED...
NATURALLY, THERE'S A BIT OF TOPSPIN THAT'S WHY THERE'S SOME STABILITY.


NO DOUBT THAT WHAT'S MAKING THIS POSSIBLE IS A STRONG LOWER BODY THAT'S BEEN TRAINING WHO KNOWS HOW LONG...
THIS POWERFUL SHOT CAN BE HIT WHILE ON THE RISE OR FROM WAY BEHIND THE BASELINE, BUT HE'S BEEN HITTING THEM RAPIDLY...


NO MATTER HOW I THINK ABOUT IT, HE'S A PLAYER IN JAPAN'S TOP LEVEL. A RANK ABOVE ME...

IT'S THE SAME AS IT HAS BEEN UP TILL NOW!
AS FOR THE EGG BALL'S COUNTER-MEASURE...

BEFORE IT BOUNCES VIOLENTLY...
HIT IT ON THE RISE!!


110

OUT.
30 - 0.
RISKY...
Wilson
IT'S DIFFICULT BUT NOT IMPOSSIBLE...

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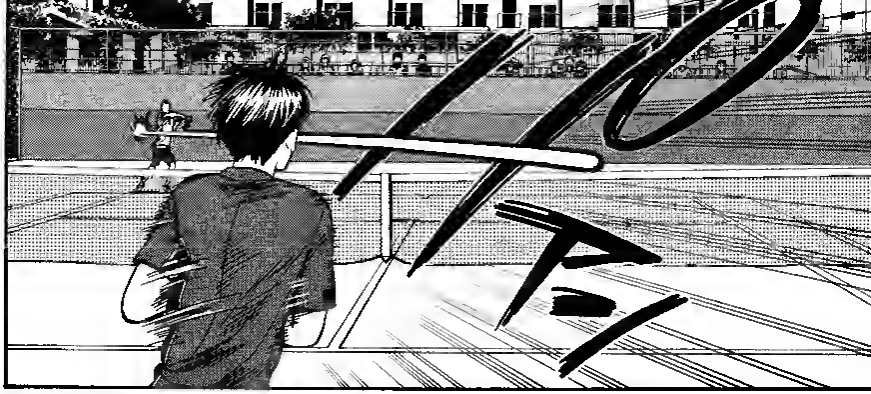
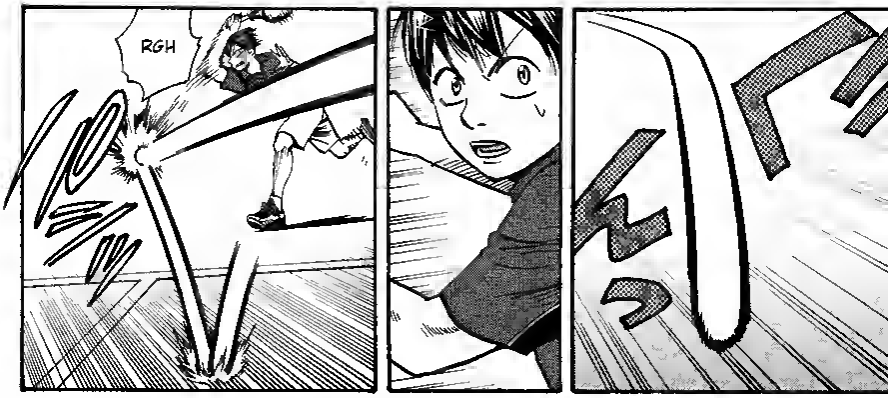
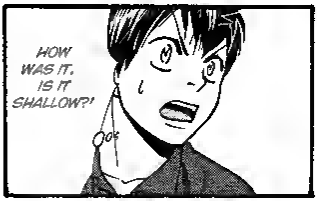
HE HITS A GOOD BALL THAT RISING SHOT WAS A BOLD MOVE TOO ..
IF HE DIDN'T HAVE AT LEAST THAT MUCH THEN HE WOULDN'T BE HERE, I SUPPOSE..
#237 ESCAPE
THE HIGH PROBABILITY OF A FAST SERVE IS PART OF KANDA-KUN'S TRADEMARK AS WELL



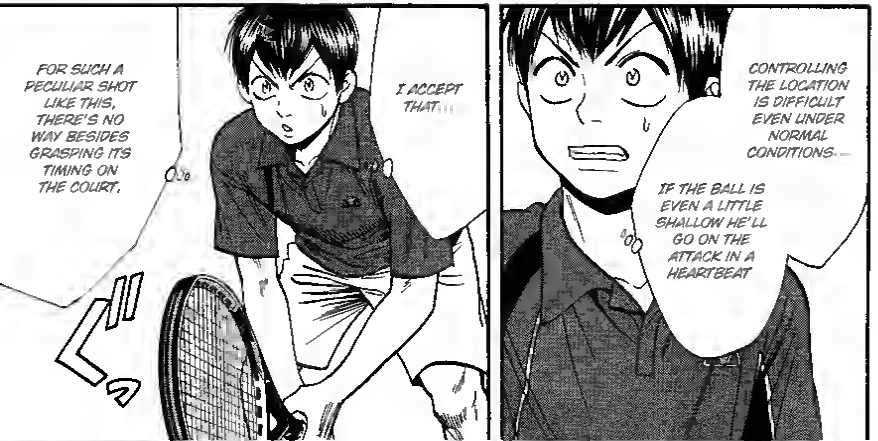

RGH

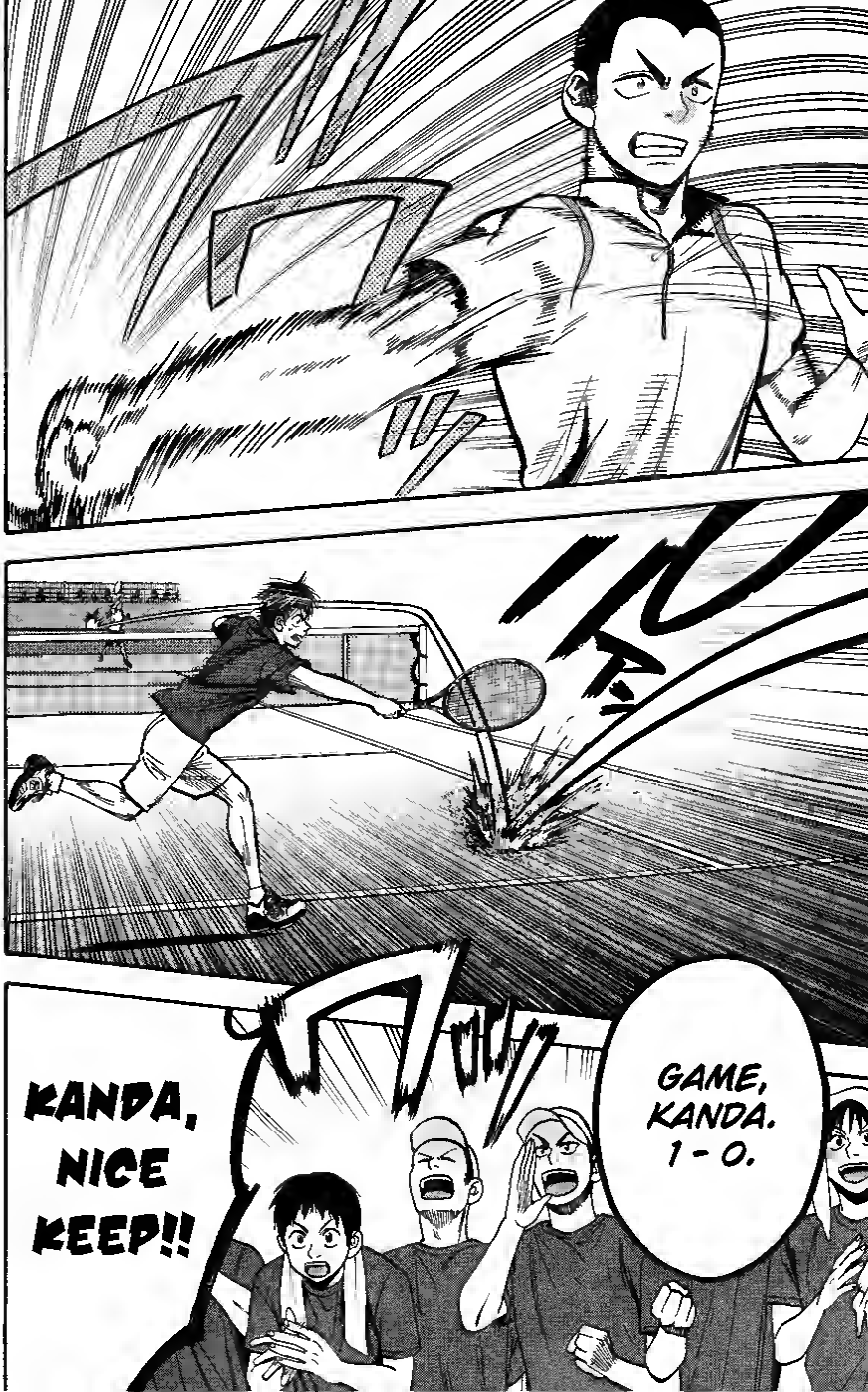
THAT CHANGE-OF-PACE YOU SPECIALIZE IN IS HARD TO USE, BUT IS IT A GOOD ONE?


HOW WAS IT. IS IT SHALLOW?'

JUST THIS RISING SHOT..

40 - 0.
KANDA'S POINT! NICE SHOW!
ドッ


FOR SUCH A PECULIAR SHOT LIKE THIS, THERE'S NO WAY BESIDES GRASPING ITS TIMING ON THE COURT.
I ACCEPT THAT...
CONTROLLING THE LOCATION IS DIFFICULT EVEN UNDER NORMAL CONDITIONS.
IF THE BALL IS EVEN A LITTLE SHALLOW HE'LL GO ON THE ATTACK IN A HEARTBEAT


GAME, KANDA. 1 - 0.
KANDA, NICE KEEP!!

C'MON KANDA, ONE POINT!!
MARUO EIICHIROU
0
KANDA HISASHI
15
DUNLOP
ATTACK FAST SO RALLIES WILL BE SHORT..
DESPITE THE LIMITED OPPORTUNITIES, I HAVE TO GET USED TO IT QUICKLY..
ポン
ポーン

A SUPER SHARP ANGLE!!

THE VICTORY GOES TO THE ONE WHO MAKES THE FIRST MOVE!!
DUNLOP
..!!

THAT IS KABAI'S TENNIS.
SOLIDARITY. EVERYONE ATTACKS.
AN IMMIDATE BARRAGE. VICTORY GOES TO THE ONE WHO MAKES THE FIRST MOVE.

...
RUNNER-UP, SINGLES: KANDA HISASHI
ONE WEEK EARLIER, AFTER THE INTERHIGH AWARDS CEREMONY...
OH, IT WAS TO MARUO-KUN...
CHAMPION, SINGLES: IDE YOSHIAKI
HEY, I CAN'T BELIEVE IDE-KUN LOST IN THE SECOND ROUND OF THE KANTOU JUNIOR THOUGH...

IT'S KIND OF STRANGE BECAUSE HE STUDIES HIS NOTES IN THE MIDDLE OF A MATCH.
HUH?
Vague Idea
MARUO-KUN...
I DON'T KNOW HIM WELL. HOW DOES HE STRIKE YOU?
HIS BODY ISN'T BIG AND HIS SPEED AND POWER IS ONLY AVERAGE. BUT...
WHILE HE WAS SCRIBBLING IN HIS NOTEBOOK...
BEFORE I KNEW IT HIS RESPONSE AND AIM BEGAN TO IMPROVE.
ARE YOU STUPID? THAT KIND OF THING'S IMPOSSIBLE.
YOU MEAN HE'S DOING HOMEWORK AND WHAT NOT...?
EVEN THOUGH I SAY THAT, I DON'T KNOW EITHER. I GUESS HE WAS MOST LIKELY ANALYZING EVERY THING ABOUT ME IN DETAIL...
I WAS SHOCKED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A LONG WHILE...
IN THE END, IT FELT LIKE I WAS BEING DRAGGED INTO HIS AND WAS BEATEN BY REAL SKILL.
THE WAY I LOOK AT IT, EVEN THOUGH I INTENDED TO PULL HIM COMPLETELY INTO MY OWN PACE...

COMPEN-
SATING
FOR HIS
LACK OF
POWER
AND SPEED
WITH DATA
ANALYSIS...?
BEST 4,
SINGLES:
ARAYA HIROSHI
I WONDER IF
IT TURNS OUT
HE'S PRETTY
GOOD AT DATA
ANALYSIS.
IN MY
CASE TOO,
HE MADE ME
REALIZE THAT
TENNIS ISN'T
JUST ABOUT
POWER AND
SPEED.
TENNIS
FROM THE
START THAT
IS READY
TO RUN
AWAY...
IS ONE
I REALLY
HATE!

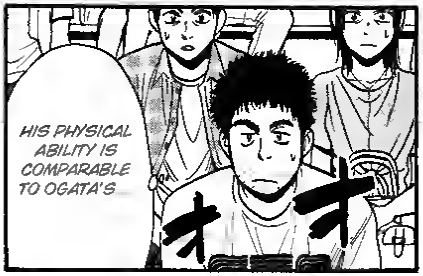
RGH
EVEN THOUGH IT'S MY SERVE, HE'S SUPER AGGRESSIVE!
WHEN YOU LACK POWER...
HIT STRONGLY.

WHEN YOU LACK SPEED...
SPRINT.

WHEN YOU'RE SHORT...
HE CAME FORWARD... FOR THOSE WHO AREN'T TALL, IT'S AN OPENING...
Wilson

GAME, KANDA. 2 - 0.
Wilson
HIGH!
JUMP...

オオオ
THAT'S IT! THAT'S KABAI'S TENNIS!
NICE BREAK, KANDA!!


HIS PHYSICAL ABILITY IS COMPARABLE TO OGATA'S...
オ
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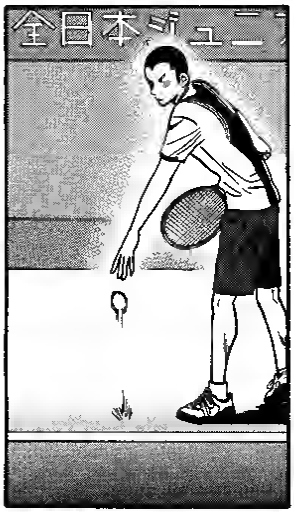
IT LOOKED LIKE HE WAS BEING PRESSURED, BUT...
SOMEHOW, HE'S AMAZING... SO STRONG...
オ
オ


全日本ジュニ

EVEN THOUGH ALL STARTS ARE UNPREDICTABLE, A FORCEFUL ATTACK IMMEDIATELY AFTER SO FEW IS SUPPOSEDLY AMAZINGLY HIGH-RISK...
IS THIS THE PURE GRIT OF KANDA-KUN THAT ARAYA-KUN MENTIONED?

オオ
THIS IS BAD... I WAS BROKEN.

BUT THERE'S MORE TO MARUO-KUN THAN THAT, YOU KNOW...
BEST 4, SINGLES: NABAE YUU
...
I PLAYED A LONG MATCH TOO, AND THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT IN THE END...
THAT'S IT, FOR SURE...
ACTUALLY, I THINK THAT HIS BEST TRAIT IS HIS MENTAL STRENGTH.
IN THAT CASE, SHOW ME...
...
FOR SURE. BECAUSE THAT GUY'S STUBBORNNESS AT THE CRITICAL MOMENT OF THE MATCH ISN'T HALFHEARTED.
椋正

I'LL KEEP SAYING IT THOUGH, BECAUSE WHAT WAS TEMPERED THE MOST WHEN I ENTERED KABAI...
IS THAT.
THE MENTAL STRENGTH THAT MAKES THSE THREE GUYS SPEAK OF YOU THAT HIGHLY...

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Baby Steps

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#238 A STRAW TO CLING ON
THERE ARE TWO MAJOR REASONS...
THE FIRST IS THAT KANDA-KUN'S EGG BALL EXCEEDED MY EXPECTATIONS...
MY CRUCIAL FIRST SERVICE GAME WAS BROKEN...
IT'S NOT A SHOT...
THAT I CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT IF MY TIMING MATCHES IT.
BECAUSE THE POWER AND SPIN OF THE BALL ARE HIGH, AFTER GOING STRAIGHT FORWARD IT SUDDENLY DROPS AND MAKES A STRONG, ELONGATED BOUNCE. I DON'T WANT TO MOVE BACK SO I TRY TO GET IT ON THE RISE, BUT BECAUSE OF CONTROLLING THE BALL'S IMPACT POINT, USING CHANGE-OF-PACE IS DIFFICULT...

I KNOW IT'S KABAI TECHNICAL'S TENNIS, BUT...
THE OTHER IS KANDA-KUN'S AGGRES-SIVENESS.
先手必勝!
IF IT'S GOING WELL, IF THE RISK IS TOO HIGH IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO KEEP THIS UP INDEFINITELY...
FIRING THIS MANY ACES RIGHT FROM THE START IS DOING TOO MUCH, UNDER ANY CIRCUM-STANCES...
IT'S NOT ONLY DIFFERENT, BUT THE SHOT IS ALSO FAST AND STRONG. IT'S NOT JUST A MATTER OF HAVING TO GET USED TO IT.
IS YOUR MENTAL STRENGTH DUE TO YOUR CONFIDENCE IN YOUR ANALYTICAL ABILITY WITH DATA...?
YOU PROBABLY EXPECT THAT YOU CAN DEAL WITH YOUR OPPONENT REGARDLESS OF THE SITUATION, BUT
... NOT SOMEBODY LIKE ME SINCE I ENTERED KABAI.

IT'S FAST AGAIN... BARELY IN, TOO!
ABOUT ONE YEAR EARLIER...

GAME, SET, WON BY ANDOU. 6 - 3.
HEY KANDA, GET UP!
A LOSS IS FIVE LAPS ON THE OUTSIDE PERIMETER. GET GOING!
SAY, HASN'T KANDA DONE 20 LAPS TODAY ALREADY?
THAT MEANS 20 KM ISN'T THAT HARSH?
HOW LONG ARE YOU GOING TO LIE THERE?
...OI
DON'T YOU KNOW IT'S 10 MORE LAPS IF YOU GET DOWN ON YOUR KNEES ON THE COURT, EXCEPT IF YOU FALL DOWN?
IT'S UNFAIR I TELL YOU!!
A MATCH AFTER YOU RUN ME TO DEATH?
IT'S IT'S BECAUSE YOU CAN'T WIN WHEN YOU PLAY HONESTLY

ARE YOU MAKING EXCUSES FOR GETTING MAD AT A SENPAI? YOU WANNA DIE?!
YOU!
YOU STILL DON'T KNOW WHERE THIS IS, DO YOU?
CO-COACH...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
WELL, I FIGURED ON SCHOOLING A KOUHAI MYSELF, BU...
KANDA!
NO, NOT YOU.

WILL ONLY FIVE LAPS BE ENOUGH? I'LL KEEP YOU RUNNING FOREVER UNTIL YOU UNDERSTAND
YOU REALLY DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT KABAI SPIRIT IS...
YOU HAD ENOUGH CHANCES TO WIN THE MATCH JUST NOW...
USING THAT COURT IN SUCH A WASTEFUL MANNER...
DIDN'T HE ONLY WATCH THE START?!
YES SIR!!
SHIRAE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SUPERVISING YOU. STAY ON GUARD.
!!
THAT SHIT-HEAD...
ARE YOU SERIOUS?!

WHAT IS KABAI SPIRIT?!
ISN'T IT JUST BEING UNFAIR?!
WHAT'S WITH THIS GOOD-FOR-NOTHING TOPSY-TURVY CONNECTION?!
DOESN'T THAT OLD IDIOT WHO JUST THROWS HIS WEIGHT AROUND UNDERSTAND?!
I WONT GET STRONGER JUST BY SIMPLY RUNNING!
DON'T TELL ME THAT HE DOESN'T HAVE ANY INTENTION OF CRUSHING ME... HE PROBABLY DOES...
IT'S INEFFICIENT! EVERYONE'S STUPID, SO NOBODY PAYS ATTENTION TO SOMETHING LIKE THAT...
I'LL GO ON A RAMPAGE BEFORE THEN... NO, SOMETHING LIKE THAT IS MEANINGLESS. I'LL GO AND ESCAPE!
BUT...
THERE'S NO ESCAPE!

HALT!
TOO...
TOO MUCH...

ハッ
ハッ
ガク
ガク
ガク
ビタッ
YES!
SPEAK UP.
YES...
THERE WON'T BE A REPEAT OF DEFYING SOMEBODY WHO'S YOUR SENIOR
AND DON'T MAKE EXCUSES FOR LOSING EVEN IF YOU DIE.
ナニ…
THEN SINCE IT SEEMS YOU REALLY DON'T UNDERSTAND ANYTHING I'LL TELL YOU.
I'M WARNING YOU. LEARN IT WELL.

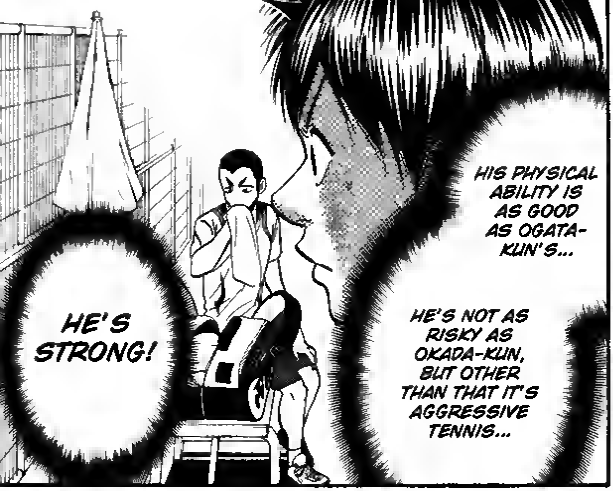
TENNIS...
VICTORY TO THE ONE... MAKES THE FIRST MOVE.
TENNIS IS A FIGHT ON THE COURT.
THE RULE IN FIGHTS IS "VICTORY GOES TO THE ONE WHO MAKES THE FIRST MOVE!"
IT'S WHETHER OR NOT YOU CAN CAUSE LETHAL DAMAGE TO YOUR OPPONENT'S VITALS FIRST WITHOUT HESITATION.
I'M TELLING YOU THAT IT'S NOT A MATTER OF HAVING TO MAKE THE FIRST MOVE...
IF YOU COULD DO THAT THEN YOU WOULDN'T HAVE LOST TODAY.
REFLECT ON IT AND MAKE THE MOST OF IT NEXT TIME.
THE MAIN POINT IS WHETHER OR NOT YOU CAN SERIOUSLY CONTEMPLATE KILLING YOUR OPPONENT FIRST.

HOWEVER, GUYS WHO HAVE BEEN IN REAL FIGHTS ARE EXPELLED FROM SCHOOL IMMEDIATELY.
WHEN MIND AND BODY ARE TRULY WORN OUT, ONE COMPLETELY CLINGS TO THE WORDS THAT ARE CLOSE AT HAND WITHOUT HESITATION ..
GET BACK!
5 MORE MINUTES!
WHEN THE CONFIDENCE CAUSED BY HIS SMOOTH SAILING WAS SMASHED AT THE ROOT,
THE DISPOSITION TO ACT BEFORE THINKING, WHETHER WHAT HE WAS DOING NOW WAS CORRECT OR NOT, SPROUTED.
WHILE SURVIVING, ONE DAY HE WAS ABLE TO UNDERSTAND...

VICTORY GOES TO THE ONE WHO MAKES THE FIRST MOVE!
THIS IS THE MOST EFFICIENT TACTIC.

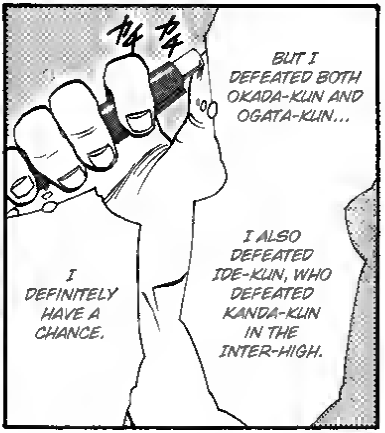
I WAS DEFEATED AT THE VERY BEGINNING HERE IN KABAI... IT IS THIS THAT I HAVE TO GIVE THE HIGHEST PRIORITY AT THE BEGINNING.
RGH
FIRST IS MAKING YOUR OPPONENT REALIZE WHICH OF YOU IS SUPERIOR BY BREAKING YOUR OPPONENT'S SPIRIT BEFORE HE THINKS.
KO
AN HONOR STUDENT LIKE YOU, WHO DOESN'T LOOK LIKE YOU'VE BEEN IN A FIGHT, WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND.

YEAH!
GAME, KANDA. 3 - 0.
OKAY KANDA, NICE STREAK!
LET'S OPEN UP THE LEAD!


HE'S STRONG!
HIS PHYSICAL ABILITY IS AS GOOD AS OGATA-KUN'S...
HE'S NOT AS RISKY AS OKADA-KUN, BUT OTHER THAN THAT IT'S AGGRESSIVE TENNIS...

HE'S PULLING AWAY. WHAT'S MORE, HE'S COMING ON STRONG..

カリカリカリ


カリカリ
BUT I DEFEATED BOTH OKADA-KUN AND OGATA-KUN...
I ALSO DEFEATED IDE-KUN, WHO DEFEATED KANDA-KUN IN THE INTER-HIGH.
I DEFINITELY HAVE A CHANCE.

THAT NOTE-BOOK...
ONE PROBLEM AT A TIME...
FIRST, A COUNTER-MEASURE FOR THE EGG BALL...
NEXT, HOW TO COUNTER THAT AGGRESSION...
カキカキカキ
TIME!
SOME-THING I OUGHT TO DO AT THE START...
NATURALLY, THE FIRST IS...

INCREASE THE RISK WITH A FAST SERVE!

15 - 0.
OKAY, IF I MAKE A POINT WITH MY SERVE, THEN I CAN SHUT OUT BOTH HIS EGG BALL AND HIS QUICK ATTACK.
BUT THERE'S A LIMIT TO THIS...
THE POWER SUDDENLY IMPROVED. HIS AIM BECAME TIGHTER, TOO.
AN ORDINARY HONOR STUDENT WON'T GET THIS FAR, RIGHT...?
ISN'T HE MORE OF A BOY GENIUS...?

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IF I DON'T INCREASE THE RISK BY A LEVEL OR TWO FROM NOW ON WITH A FAST SERVE...
I WON'T AIM FOR ANOTHER ACE LIKE THAT ONE, BUT...
MY SERVE WAS BROKEN, BUT TODAY IS THE DAY IT'S GOING IN
IT SHOULD BE GOOD!

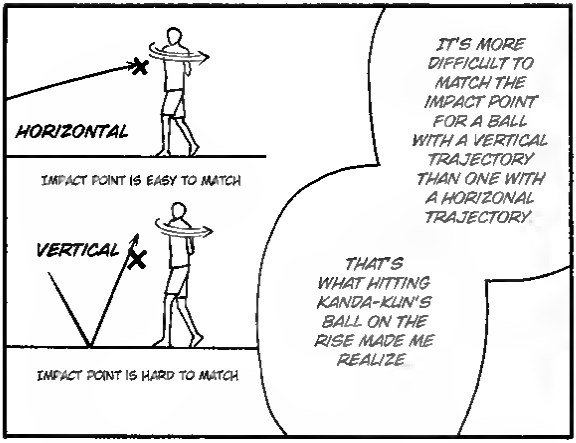
#239 RETREAT

YES, IT'S IN!
!!

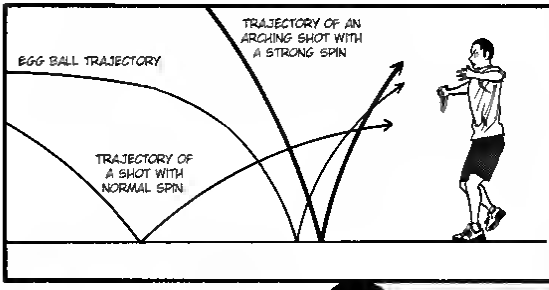
30 - 0.
ALMOST, KANDA!
LET'S GO, ONE POINT!
THAT WAS DANGEROUS, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS A GOOD SERVE
THE VARIETY OF HIS SERVES IS THE USUAL, STRONG AND WEAK ONES SHOW UP, BUT HE HITS THEM PRECISELY
THAT SHOT JUST NOW ATTACKED WITH A SPIN THAT EMPHASIZED LOCATION. SINCE IT FOLLOWED IMMEDIATELY AFTER A FLAT SHOT THAT EMPHASIZED SPEED, IT WAS EFFECTIVE
日本ジュニアテニス大会
IN THE END, THE REASON FOR THAT COMBINATION IS BECAUSE THE POWER ITSELF ISN'T ENOUGH.

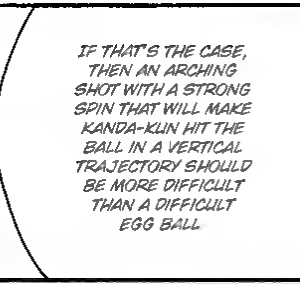
IT'S JUST CAMOUFLAGE AFTER ALL, READY TO RUN AWAY...
IN THAT CASE, NOTHING WILL CHANGE...
NOW I'LL...

?!
IT'S ARCHING DEEP..
A STRONG SPIN.
HE MOVED BACK...

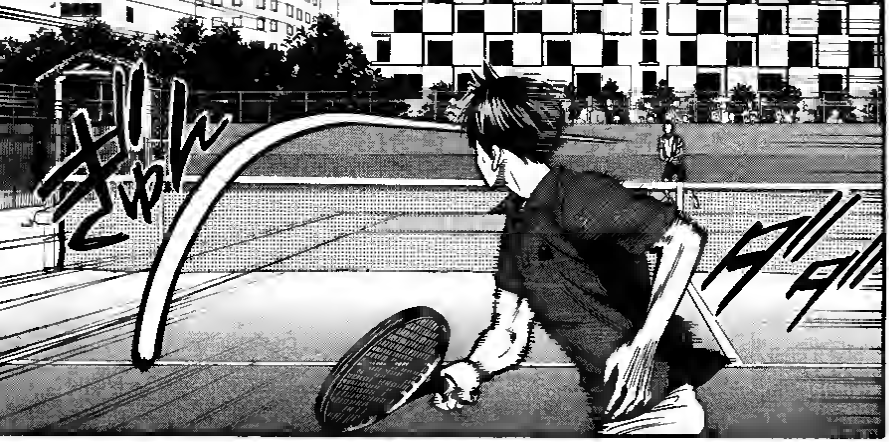

HORIZONTAL
IMPACT POINT IS EASY TO MATCH
VERTICAL
IMPACT POINT IS HARD TO MATCH
IT'S MORE DIFFICULT TO MATCH THE IMPACT POINT FOR A BALL WITH A VERTICAL TRAJECTORY THAN ONE WITH A HORIZONAL TRAJECTORY
THAT'S WHAT HITTING KANDA-KUN'S BALL ON THE RISE MADE ME REALIZE

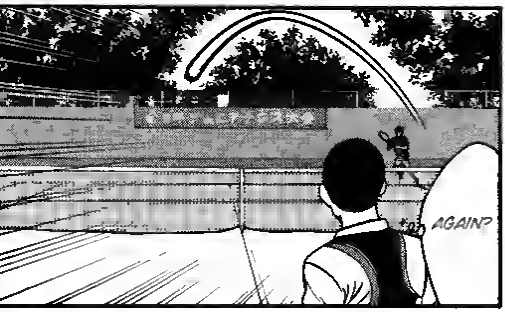
SINCE A FAST SWING IS A FEATURE OF KANDA-KUN'S EGG BALL, MATCHING THE IMPACT POINT SHOULD BE DIFFICULT IN ITSELF...

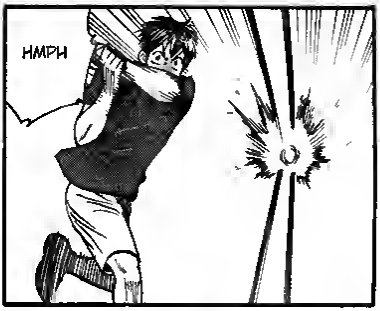

EGG BALL TRAJECTORY
TRAJECTORY OF AN ARCHING SHOT WITH A STRONG SPIN
TRAJECTORY OF A SHOT WITH NORMAL SPIN


IF THAT'S THE CASE, THEN AN ARCHING SHOT WITH A STRONG SPIN THAT WILL MAKE KANDA-KUN HIT THE BALL IN A VERTICAL TRAJECTORY SHOULD BE MORE DIFFICULT THAN A DIFFICULT EGG BALL

IT'S ANNOYING, YET DOES IT MEAN HE'S ALSO WORKING ON A SAFE PLAN .?


キュキュ
BALL


AGAIN?


HMPH

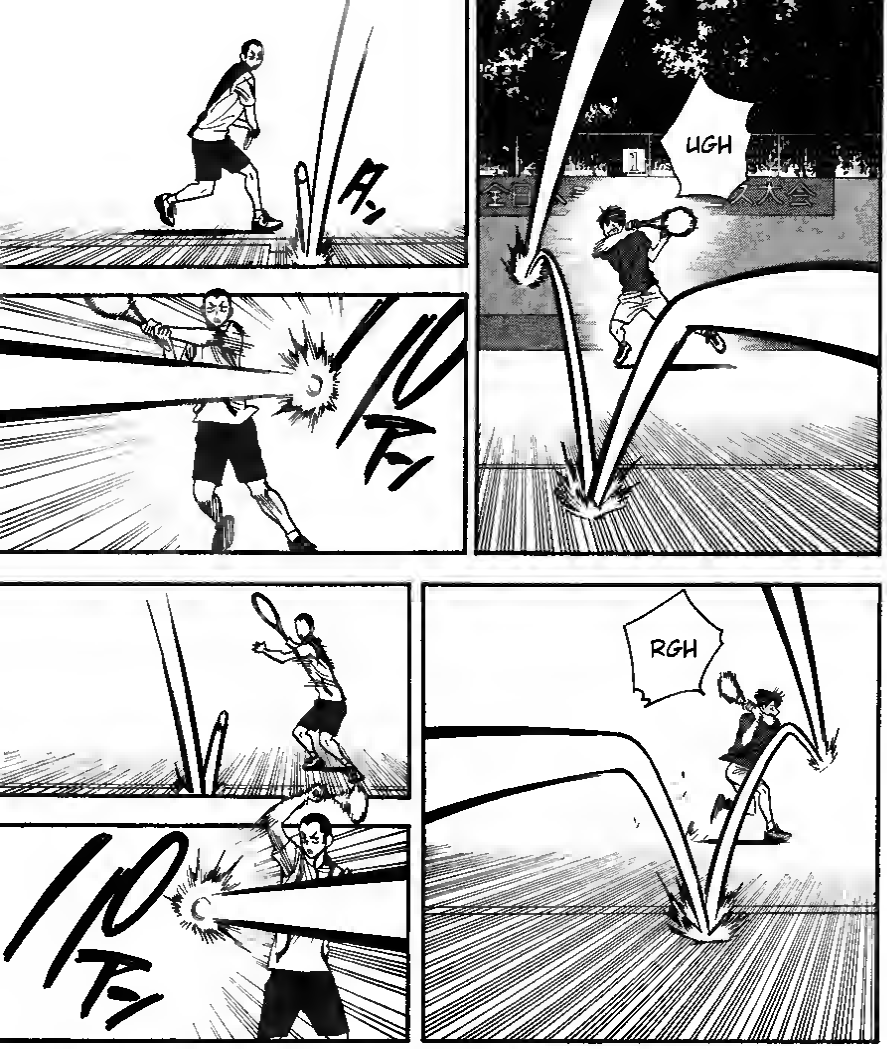
WHILE THIS STALEMATE IS GOING I WON'T MAKE THE POINT, BUT I WON'T BE SROKEN IN ONE HIT!
ドン

EVEN THOUGH HE'S BEEN BANGING POINTS IN ONE AFTER ANOTHER UNTIL JUST A WHILE AGO, I'M SOMEHOW MANAGING...

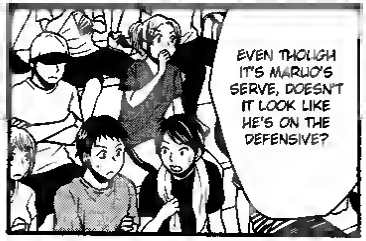
THOUGH I SAY THAT, A LONG RALLY AT THE BASELINE IS JUST WHAT I'M HOPING FOR.
I GUESS YOU'RE PREPARED FOR IT!
IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE GETTING READY TO RUN AWAY!

ダン
A SHARP ANGLE TO A SPOT SHORT OF THE BASELINE..
30 - 15.
オオオ
AMAZING.
THAT ONE JUST NOW WAS IMPOSSIBLE. I CAN ONLY GET OVER IT...

HAH
!!
OUT.
40 - 15.
A QUICK SERVE?!
THERE WAS THAT TOO, HUH....
Crap
OKAY, AFTER ONE MORE POINT I'LL KEEP.



HE'S BEEN CALLED SOMETHING LIKE THAT?
BUT THIS IS EI-CHAN WE'RE TALKING ABOUT, WHO MADE A NAME FOR HIMSELF AS KANAGAWA'S PUSHING KING, SO IT'S BUSINESS AS USUAL.
PASS NO PICK

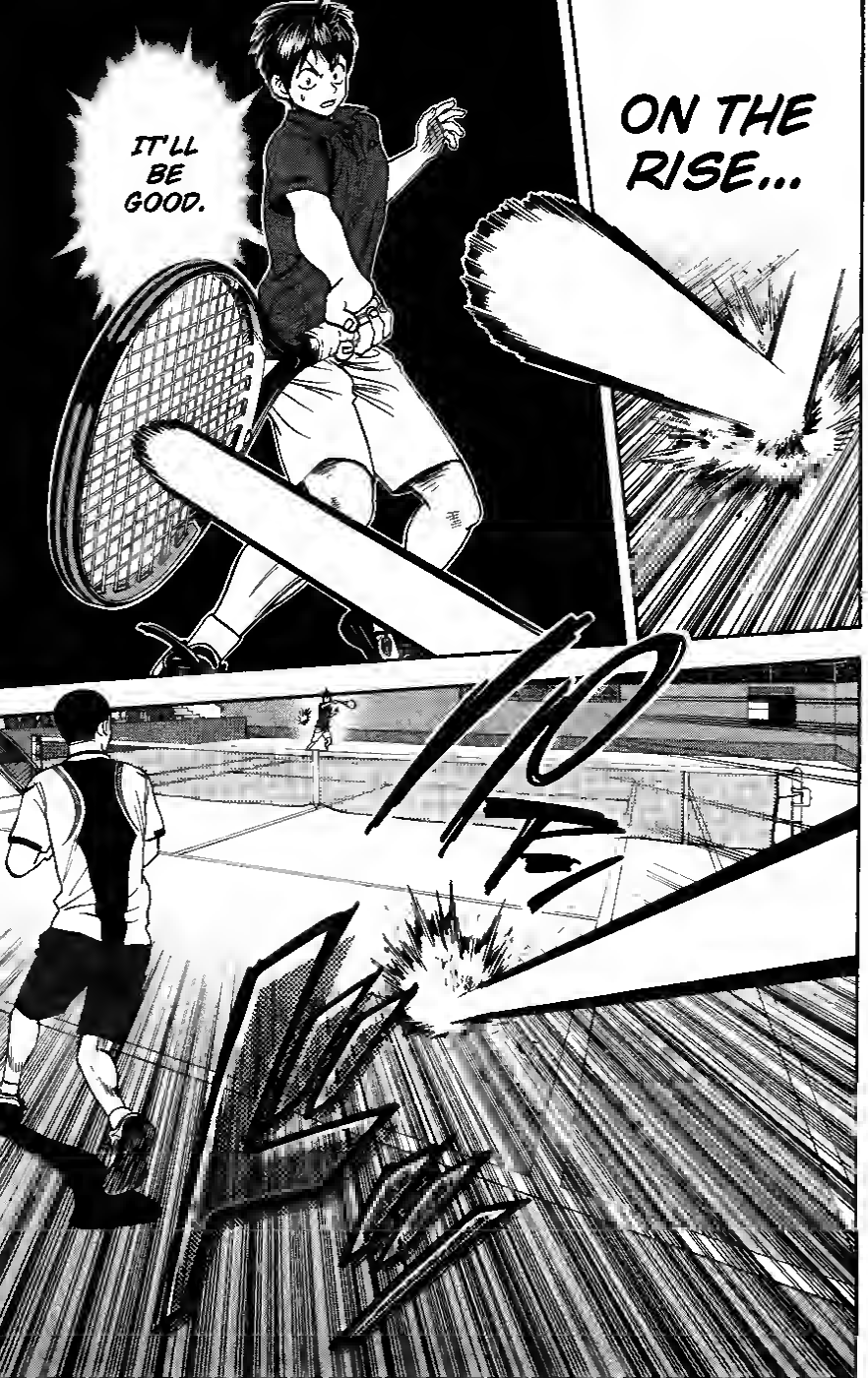


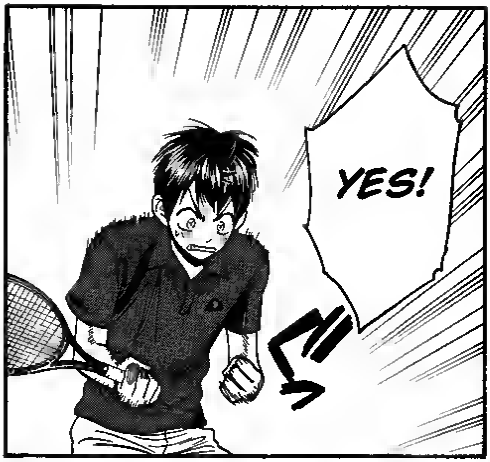
※ PUSHING: A COLLOQUIAL TERM IN TENNIS FOR A PLAYING STYLE THAT WAITS FOR THE OPPONENT'S MISTAKE'S BY PLAYING A SUPER DEFENSIVE STYLE WITHOUT HITTING OFFENSIVE SHOTS. SIMILAR TO A DEFENSIVE BASELINER.

IN ADDITION, IF I PUT MY MIND TO IT, I CAN EVEN CHALLENGE YOU.
EVEN THOUGH IT'S YOUR SERVE...
BUT IF THIS CONTINUES, YOU'LL GET TIRED FIRST...
AS THINGS STAND, IT WON'T BE DECIDED EASILY...
IF THE BALL I WANT DOESN'T COME, THEN I NEED TO ADJUST THE TIMING OF THE SHOT...
HERE WE GO!
A BALL THAT'S EVEN THE SLIGHTEST BIT DECENT...

Prince

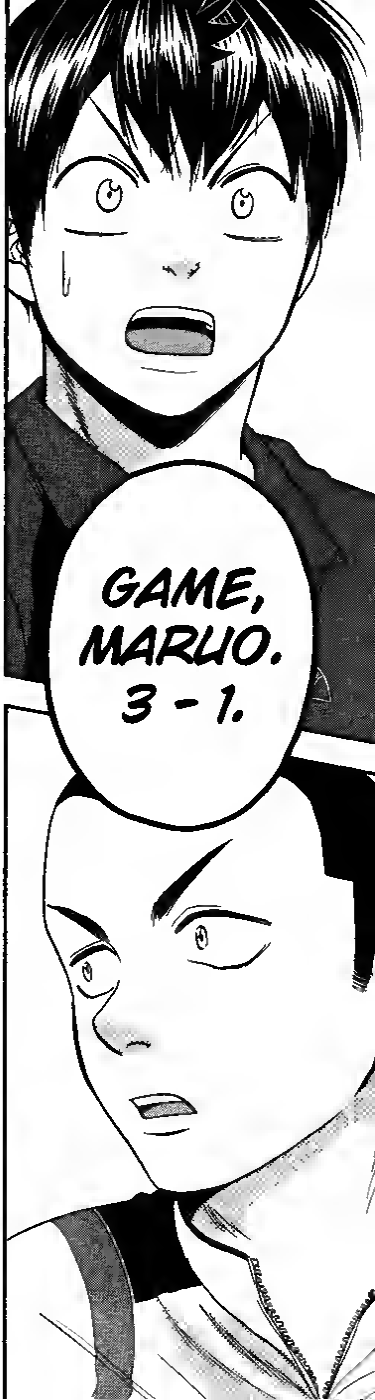
HAH
A JUMP SHOT FROM THE BASELINE?!
IF IT'S AT THIS DEPTH WITH THIS POWER...
IF IT'S THE EGG BALL THAT HE HIT WITH A MESSED UP STANCE.


IT'LL BE GOOD.
ON THE RISE...


YES!

IT WAS DANGER-OUS, BUT TO SOME EXTENT I HELD MY GAME.
MY FIRST GAME!

REFINING MY TACTICS WITH AOI-SAN YESTERDAY WAS WORTH IT!
THE COUNTER-MEASURE FOR AN EGG BALL WOULD BE SOME-THING LIKE THIS...
THE PROBLEMS KEEP MOUNTING, BUT TO KEEP AGAINST A SECOND SEED.


GAME, MARUO. 3 - 1.

WHAT REMAINS IS HOW FAR THIS TENNIS CAN BE USED.
I SEE, IT'S THIS SORT OF THING.
おおおお
HMM, WHAT?
WHO'S PLAYING IN THAT COURT OVER THERE?

EH? THEY'RE SAYING THAT SHIMIZU AKI WAS BROKEN TWICE IN THE FIRST SET AND THE SCORE IS 1-5!!
THAT CAN'T BE TRUE!! IS IT FINALLY THE FALL OF THE QUEEN!?
IT'S STRANGE...
EVEN THOUGH I'M ON THE COURT, MY BRAIN WON'T SWITCH OVER COMPLETELY...

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Baby Steps

ベイビーステップ

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VampireCat

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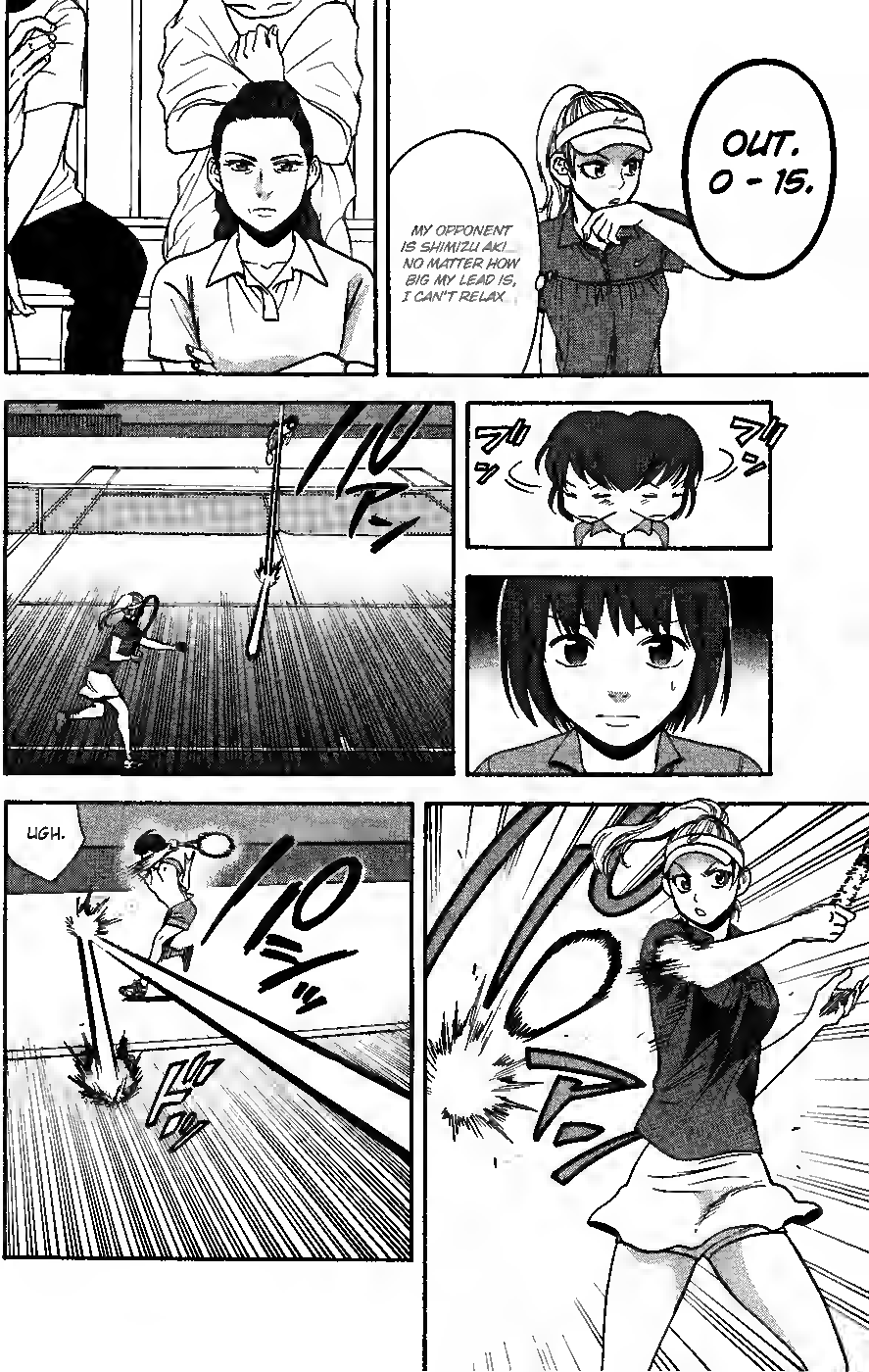
Reika

Q-Checker:
jaeshen

IS IT POSSIBLE FOR SHIMIZU AKI TO LOSE A SET BY A LARGE MARGIN?
BUT SHE'S ALREADY BEEN BROKEN TWICE AND THE SCORE IS 1-5. SHE'S BEEN MAKING ERRORS IN OFFENSE AND DEFENSE
#240 POSITION
...!
FOR THE PROBABILITY OF HER FIRST SERVE TO DECREASE 50%... IT'S IMPOSSIBLE

NO MATTER WHAT I DO, IT'S NO GOOD...
EVEN THOUGH ANYTIME I BEGIN A MATCH I COULD JUST DO THE "SAME AS ALWAYS"...
I HAVE TO FACE THE CAUSE OF THIS...
AND GET BACK TO MY USUAL SELF.
EVEN IF I LOSE THIS SET, I HAVE TO TAKE SOME CHANCES

MARUO-KUN...
I... DO I REALLY LIKE MARUO-KUN?
STC
ドッ
パーン

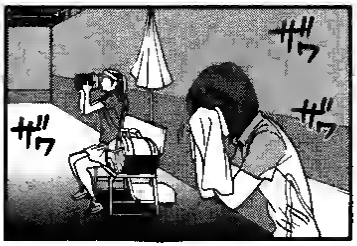

OUT.
0 - 15.
MY OPPONENT IS SHIMIZU AKI... NO MATTER HOW BIG MY LEAD IS, I CAN'T RELAX.
UGH.

I DON'T GET IT...
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE THAT I'D UNDERSTAND THAT SORT OF THING, I'M SURE...
UP UNTIL NOW I HAVEN'T EXPERIENCED THAT SORT OF THING...
BEFORE THAT, MARUO-KUN ALSO HAS SOMEONE HE LIKES...
EVEN THOUGH I KNOW IT'S NO USE, NO MATTER HOW MUCH I THINK ABOUT IT NOW...
WHY CAN'T I FOCUS ON THIS MATCH?

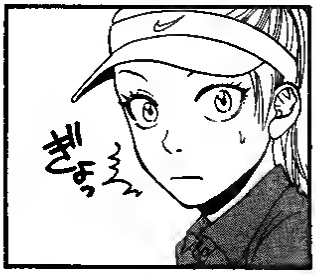
0 - 30.
15 - 40.
THAT'S ALSO WRONG...
0 - 40.
IS IT BECAUSE I'M REGRETTING SOMETHING THAT I SHOULD HAVE DONE?
EVEN IF I LIKED HIM, I WOULDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO...
NO MATTER HOW MUCH I THINK ABOUT IT, THERE WASN'T ANYTHING I COULD DO.

FIRST SET WON BY SHINODA, 6 - 1.
UWA! SHIMIZU AK! WAS BROKEN AGAIN!!!
HEY, SOMETHING WILL HAPPEN, WON'T IT?

WHAT AM I GOING TO DO ..?



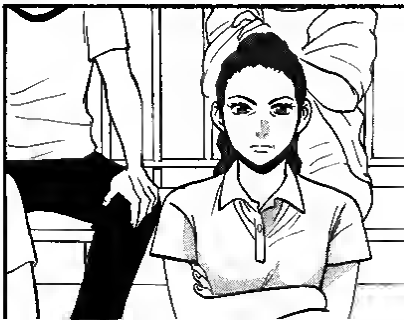
HA..


ぎゅっ

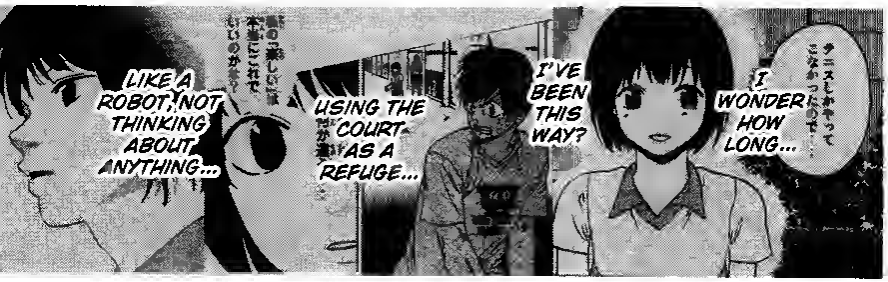
EVEN THOUGH I DON'T WANT TO THINK ABOUT IT ANYMORE, MY MIND WON'T STOP ,
AND YET BECAUSE I HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING, I CAN'T EVEN THINK THAT I LOST...
THAT'S WHY I CAN'T REFLECT ON WHAT I DID...

WHAT WAS WRONG THEN?
MARUO-KUN?
TAKASAKI-SAN?
MOTHER...?

I'M THE ONE AT FAULT WHO, WITHOUT ANY THOUGHT, ALWAY DID WHAT I WAS TOLD TO BY MOTHER AND HAD COME TO BLAME HER FOR EVERYTHING.
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE.. IT'S WRONG.



TIME.
I TRIED TO ESCAPE ON TO THE TENNIS COURT WHERE I DON'T HAVE TO THINK ABOUT ANYTHING...
IT WAS ALSO THAT WAY TODAY...
THIS ONLY HAPPENED BECAUSE I ALWAYS TOOK THE EASIER WAY OF NOT HAVING TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANYTHING...


LIKE A ROBOT, NOT THINKING ABOUT ANYTHING...
USING THE COURT AS A REFUGE...
I'VE BEEN THIS WAY?
I WONDER HOW LONG...

I WANT TO CHANGE...
I'M NO GOOD THIS WAY...

EVEN THOUGH I'M SURE I ACTUALLY LIKED TENNIS MORE...

I WANT TO CHANGE EVERY-THING!
AS I THOUGHT, SOMETHING CHANGED WHEN MOMOYAMA-SAN BEAT AKI-CHAN
GAME, MOMOYAMA. 4 - 3. FIRST SET.
I GET THE IMPRESSION SHE'S STABILIZED MENTALLY
SHE'S GOTTEN CONFIDENT, FOR SURE

I GUESS THAT'S IT, BECAUSE EI-CHAN, WHO'S CLOSEST TO ME,
AND WHOSE SPECIALTY IS ANALYSIS AND HAS ANALYZED ME, SAID SO.
I WONDER IF IT'S BECAUSE I COMPLETELY THINK THAT AND I'M RESPONDING TO SUGGESTION...
TIME.
THEN THERE'S NO NEED TO WORRY ABOUT WHAT I THOUGHT JUST NOW...
THE CURRENT ME CAN WIN!!

ダッ
FORWARD.

I WILL SURPASS THIS SPEED AND POWER.
THIS IS THE COUNTER-ATTACK OF JAPAN'S BEST...
DON'T FOLLOW IT!
HIS RHYTHM...
トン
!

YOU'RE READY TO CHALLENGE ME IN A CONTEST OF POWER. YOU WON'T LIKE THE SHOT AT ALL...
THE WORLD WON'T ALWAYS GO THE WAY YOU THINK IT WILL, I'M SURE...
30 - 30.
YEAH!
...
I DON'T KNOW WHO'LL GET ALL THE WAY TO THE CHAMPIONSHIP,
BUT LOOKING JUST THAT FAR WILL TRIP YOU UP.
1 2 3
NABAE 4
ARAYA 4

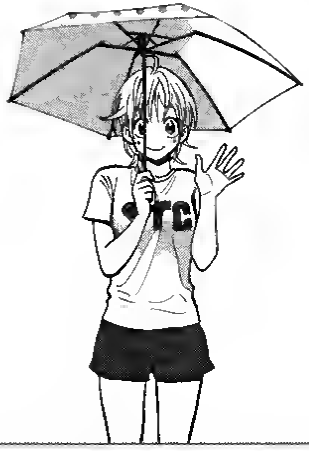
In Eiichirou vs. Kanda, the score is 4-1 with Eiichirou holding one game against Kanda.
PASS NO PAST!
He aims for another keep, centering on a strong spin.
RGH

AN AVERAGE LOB WITH THIS EFFECTIVE SPIN SURE IS ANNOYING...
IF HE'S AIMING FOR A CHANCE TO ATTACK WHILE DEFENDING...
ぎゅん
I TOTALLY GET THAT HE'S NOT SIMPLY GETTING READY TO RUN AWAY, BUT...
IT'S EFFICIENT...
GO!
WILL IT GO WELL HERE?!

IT'S NO GOOD, THE TIMING IS FORCED..
HAH
STEP BACK AND RE-GROUP
RGH

AS THINGS GO NOW, BECAUSE I'M JUST RUNNING AROUND HITTING A SPIN BALL, I CAN ONLY WAIT FOR MY OPPONENT'S ERRORS...
A LITTLE WHILE AGO, WHEN I OPENED A BREACH WITH A JUMP SHOT, THAT WAS ALREADY A SHOT AS IF I WAS SAYING I WON'T LET HIM HIT IT...
MY JUMP SHOT ISN'T GOING WELL BY ANY MEANS...
IF I DON'T FIND A BREACH THAT CAN CHANGE THIS CONTINUOUSLY DEFENSIVE FIGHT. .
IF A CHANCE TO HIT A JUMP SHOT DOESN'T SHOW UP, ANYTHING ELSE IS FINE

CONTINUES IN VOL. 26



Baby Steps

LATE JULY, RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF SUMMER BREAK.
IT'S HOT...
I'M KAGEYAMA KOJIROU, A THIRD-YEAR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT.
SPECIAL CHAPTER
LATELY, THERE'S BEEN SOMETHING ON MY MIND...
OR RATHER, SOME-ONE...
KAGE-YAMA-KUN!!!
EH?
UM... IT'S HARD TO SAY, BUT...
THAT SOMEONE IS SASAKI HIMEKO-SAN.
EH?

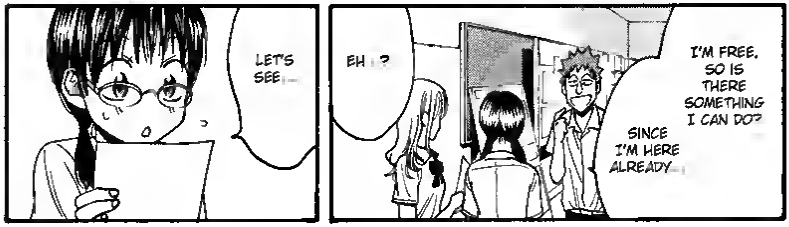
HUH?
SORRY...
I CAN'T GO TO MARUO-KUN'S NEXT MATCH...
WH-WHY?
Even though you'd said you were go ing
BE-CAUSE...
OUT OF THE WAY!
BRING IT OVER THERE!
I BOUGHT WATER!
SHOUT LOUDER!!
SMILE!
THEY SAID THE LOCATION OF THE RELAY PRACTICE CHANGED!!
DURING SUMMER BREAK I'M TOO BUSY WITH THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE SPORTS FEST....
OH YEAH, SASAKI-SAN IS A MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE...

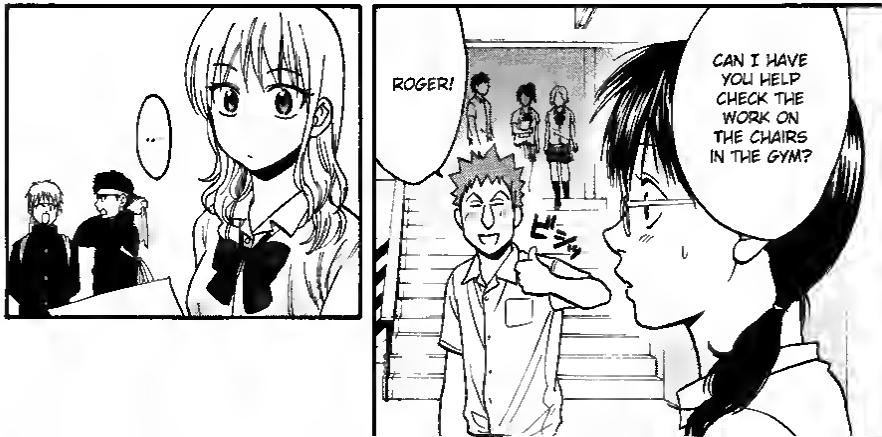
!
Tsuuuuu*
EVEN IF I GO, IT'S PAINFUL...
BESIDES, OSAKA IS FAR...
BUT THAT EI-CHAN AND THE GIRL HE LIKES RECENTLY DEVELOPED INTO MUTUAL LOVE.
IN THE MIDDLE OF SUMMER BREAK, HIS FUTURE AT STAKE...
YEAH...
MY FRIEND MARUO EIICHIROU IS COMPETING IN A TENNIS MATCH IN OSAKA
※ THIS IS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE KANTO JUNIOR.
Friends
IT WAS WHEN SASAKI HIMEKO-SAN'S HEART WAS UTTERLY BROKEN.
EVEN THOUGH I THOUGHT SOMETHING LIKE "WITH THIS CHANCE"
SINCE WE'RE IN DIFFERENT CLASSES, EI-CHAN'S MATCHES ARE OUR ONLY POINT OF CONTACT. .
THA-THAT'S RIGHT!

HIME! COME HERE FOR A SECOND!
Student Council President
AH, GIVE ME A SECOND..
SORRY! I'LL SEE YOU LATER!
SHE REALLY SEEMS BUSY...
BUT WHAT SHOULD I DO?
AS IT IS, I'LL SERIOUSLY LOSE MY POINT OF CONTACT
IF NOTHING HAPPENS, GRADUATION WILL COME BY QUICKLY AND...
I'll see you!
THOUGH THINKING ABOUT IT...
NOT BEING ABLE TO MAKE A POINT OF CONTACT EXCEPT FOR EI-CHAN'S MATCHES WAS CARELESS IN THE FIRST PLACE!
THAT'S HOW IT STANDS...

CHANCES ARE HIGH THAT I'LL BE THE ONLY ONE WHO'S GOING TO GO CHEER FOR YOU.
IS THAT SO... I'LL STILL BE HAPPY IF JUST KAGEYAMA COMES.
I COMPLETELY UNDERSTAND SASAKI-SAN'S SITUATION.
SPORTS FEST PREPERATIONS LAST ALL THROUGHOUT SUMMER BREAK, RIGHT? IT'S TO BE EXPECTED...
AND THERE'S ALSO STUDYING FOR THE ENTRANCE EXAMS.
理系数学
IF IT'S THAT HARD THEN KAGEYAMA OUGHT TO HELP OUT WITH THE SPORTS FEST PREPARTIONS TOO...
!!
IS THAT.. YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT!
YENNO, ONCE IN A BLUE MOON YOU SAY SOMETHING GOOD!!
オイ
ONCE IN A BLUE MOON...
what's up with that?

SASAKI-SAN!!!
I CAN MAKE MULTIPLE POINTS OF CONTACT... AND IF SASAKI-SAN'S WORKLOAD DECREASES THEN SHE MIGHT BE ABLE TO GO WITH ME...
IT'S KILLING TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE!


LET'S SEE...
EH!?
I'M FREE. SO IS THERE SOMETHING I CAN DO?
SINCE I'M HERE ALREADY...


...
ROGER!
CAN I HAVE YOU HELP CHECK THE WORK ON THE CHAIRS IN THE GYM?
ビシッ

OH KAGEYAMA, THIS IS RARE OF YOU.
YEAH, WELL... SOME-TIMES..
IT'S 11 PIPE CHAIRS AS SEATS FOR THE BROAD-CAST AND...
THIS CHAIR'S RUSTING...
HOW MANY FOR THE GUESTS?
STRICTLY SPEAKING, I'M NOT THE TYPE TO DO THIS SORT OF THING...
KAGEYAMA-KUN'S WORKING HARD, ISN'T HE?
UH... UH HUH.
...I KIND OF GET THE FEELING IT'S FOR HIME'S SAKE.

おっ
THIS...
カあ
OH CRAP, A LANDMINE?
ズーン
OH, BUT HIME LIKES MARUO-KUN, RIG-...
AH... THEN THIS COPY FOR THE ROOM OF THE TEACHERS OF THE STUDENTS PARTICIPATING HERE...
since I'll do something here...
OKAY!
CONFIRMATION AND THE TRANSFER OF NECESSARY PARTS ARE DONE!
IS THERE SOMETHING ELSE?
ビクッ
SASAKI-SAN.

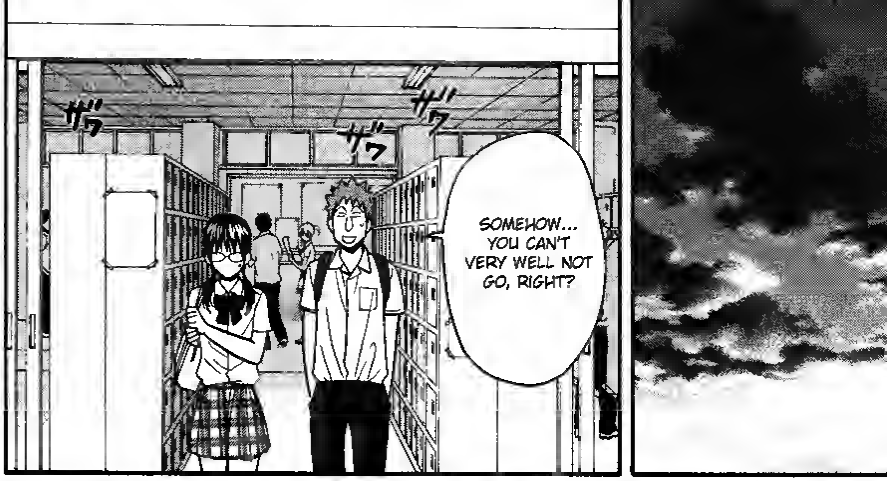
The red team's just within budget...
THE NEXT PRACTICE IS WAITING, SO MAKE IT QUICK.
THE PLACE HAS ALREADY BEEN SCHEDULED OUT, SO SORRY...
IT'S FINE IF WE GO JUST A BIT LONGER, RIGHT?
Worked up a good sweat
500
You think?
THREE DAYS LATER...
I MEAN...
ISN'T THIS A LITTLE TOO HECTIC!?

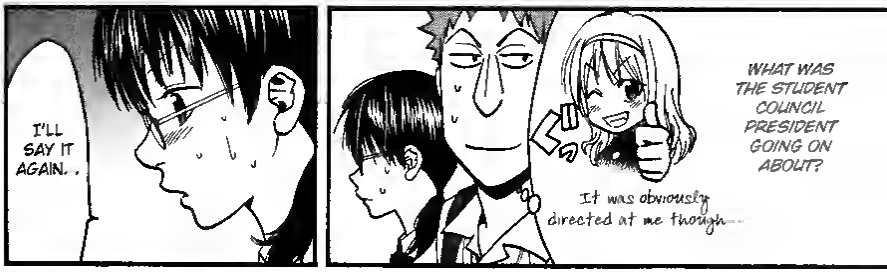
SASAKI-SAN, SASAKI-SAN..
EH... AH, WHAT?
ISN'T THIS A BIT TOO MUCH WORK?
OH, SORRY... I ASKED FOR TOO MUCH...
THAT'S NOT IT...
I INTEND TO HELP OUT, BECAUSE SASAKI-SAN SEEMED SO BUSY THAT YOU COULDN'T GO WATCH EI-CHAN'S MATCH..
BUT NO MATTER HOW I LOOK AT IT, AREN'T YOU DOING WORK THAT OTHER PEOPLE CAN DO JUST AS WELL?
IT'S..
IT'S BECAUSE I WAS ASKED..
TH- THAT'S NOT IT!!
ARE YOU THAT AGAINST CHEERING FOR EI-CHAN?
COULD IT BE THAT YOU'RE DELIBERATELY ADDING JOBS SO THAT YOU WON'T HAVE TIME?
You can go one day, can't you?

EH? THEN...
COULD IT BE...
COULD IT BE YOU DON'T LIKE GOING WITH ME?
ビクッ
...
...
ガーン
ガーン
AH!
THAT'S NOT... IT'S NOT LIKE THAT!
A-... IT- IT'S...

I... I DON'T DISLIKE IT...
THAT'S WHY...
I'M EMBAR-RASSED...
EH. .?
BY THAT...
AHH, THERE YOU ARE!! HIME!!! KAGEYAMA-KUN!!
I HEARD A LITTLE WHILE AGO, BUT THEY SAY YOU TWO ARE GOING TO CHEER FOR MARUO-KUN?

AH... CHEERING, THAT'S WHAT WE INTENDED TO DO, BUT...
THEN GO DO OUR SHARE OF CHEERING TOO!!
WE'RE TAKASAKI-SAN'S SUPPORTERS!
IT'S THE ALL-JAPAN, ISN'T IT? HOW AWESOME IS THAT?! IT'S TWO PEOPLE FROM OUR SCHOOL, TOO!
BUT OSAKA'S FAR...
ESPECIALLY MARUO-KUN, BECAUSE HE TURNED DOWN MY PERSONAL INVITATION AND DIDN'T JOIN THE STUDENT COUNCIL TO FOCUS ON TENNIS...
GIVE HIM A PEP TALK AND TELL HIM THAT IF HE DOESN'T DO HIS BEST, I WON'T ACKNOWLEDGE HIM.
WELL, I HAVEN'T DECIDED TO GO YET..
THEREFORE, PLEASE REPRESENT ALL THE STUDENTS!

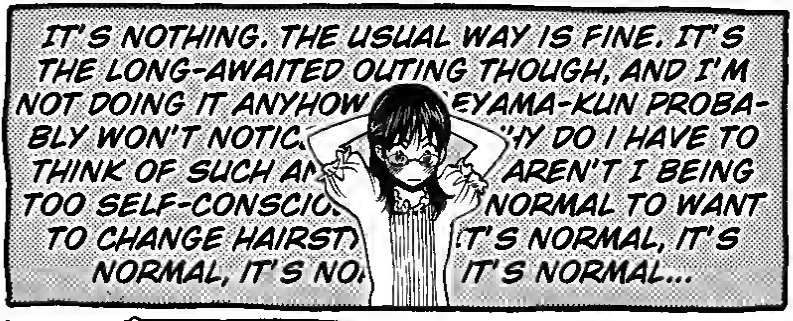

SOMEHOW... YOU CAN'T VERY WELL NOT GO, RIGHT?

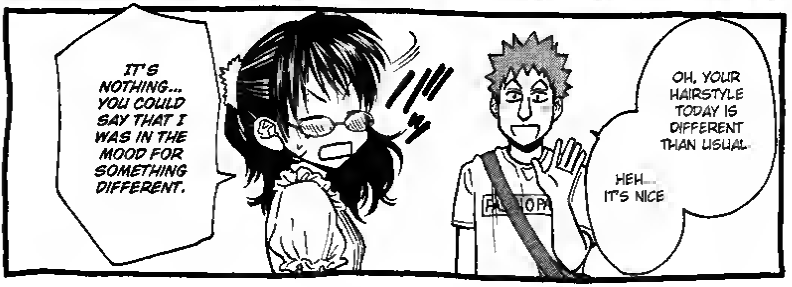

I'LL SAY IT AGAIN. .
WHAT WAS THE STUDENT COUNCIL PRESIDENT GOING ON ABOUT?
It was obviously directed at me though...

TH-
YEAH YEAH...
Because a big wall stands between "don't dislike" and "like."
Do you get it!?
TSUNDERE TYPE .
A LITTLE WHILE AGO, I SAID I DON'T DISLIKE IT, BUT...
BECAUSE IT'S A DIFFERENT MATTER, IT'S NOT 'LIKE' OR ANYTHING...
SO DON'T MISUNDER-STAND!!

WELCOME.
THANKS... FOR HELPING ME OUT.
OU by KDDI
From Kageyama Kojirou
Sub. All-Japan Junior
It's been decided that Sasaki-san and I, the two of us, will go and cheer you on as representatives of the school. Make sure you don't lose until then!
SHOULD I CALL...?
To say thanks
HM? THE EMAIL IS ABOUT THE MINIMUM TIME REQUIRED IF SOMETHING WERE TO HAPPEN...

-≫Morning of the Day of the Semi-finals≪-


IT'S NOTHING. THE USUAL WAY IS FINE. IT'S THE LONG-AWAITED OUTING THOUGH, AND I'M NOT DOING IT ANYHOW
EYAMA-KUN PROBA-
BLY WON'T NOTIC
HY DO I HAVE TO
THINK OF SUCH AN
AREN'T I BEING
TOO SELF-CONSCIO
NORMAL TO WANT
TO CHANGE HAIRST
T'S NORMAL, IT'S
NORMAL, IT'S NO
IT'S NORMAL...


IT'S NOTHING... YOU COULD SAY THAT I WAS IN THE MOOD FOR SOMETHING DIFFERENT.
OH, YOUR HAIRSTYLE TODAY IS DIFFERENT THAN USUAL.
HEH... IT'S NICE

Baby Steps 25 Extra

Date

Hello, this is Katsuki!

Volume 25 turned out to have lots of girls.

Personally, I would have liked to draw something more like a demonic-looking Natsu hitting a power shot or a teary-eyed Aki finishing with a shot to a nasty spot and making it seem easy, but...

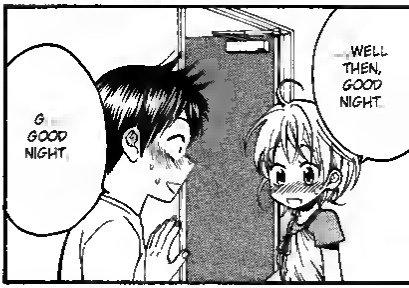
You know... it might... not... be cute.

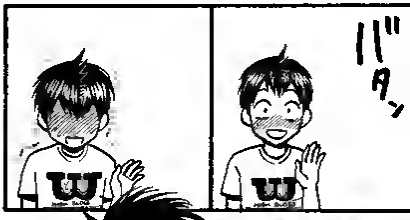
There might be a demand...

...but it's unlikely.

That's all. Until next volume!

~IGNORANCE IS BLISS~





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